CITY HILIGHTS

The Truth Speaks

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MODI SOLD BHARAT MATA: RAHUL

What have you done on tariffs? At the beginning, 3% was average tariffs, now it is 18% 6x increase; US imports to go up from $46 billion to $146 billion, this is absurd, says the LoP slams India-US trade deal

WAR OF WORDS

RAHUL GANDHI
The deal with the US is complete surrender. The govt has sold out Bharat Mata to protect the BJP's financial architecture.

SUDHANSHU TRIVEDI
Rahul Gandhi drags politics to the lowest level, repeatedly levelling absurd allegations against PM Modi, dripping with envy.

NEW DELHI

In a no-holds-barred attack, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday accused the Central Government of selling 'Bharat Mata' through the India-US interim trade deal and that it was a "wholesale surrender' with India's energy security handed over to America and farmers' interests compromised.

Participating in the debate on the Union Budget, Gandhi said he does not believe that any Indian prime minister, including Narendra Modi, would agree to such a deal unless there is a "chokehold" on him.

"Why has he (Modi) sold India — because they (the US) are choking him. They have a grip on his neck," said Gandhi, who began his address with an analogy of how in martial arts after securing a grip, the next step is a chokehold, and then the opponent taps to give up.

"You have sold India. Are you not ashamed of selling India? You have sold our mother, Bharat Mata," he said while referring to the trade pact.

"It is a tragedy because it is a surrender not just of the Prime Minister. He has surrendered the future of 1.5 billion Indians. He has surrendered the future because he wants to protect the BJP's financial architecture on which there is a case in the US," Gandhi said.

He energy security has gone under the India-US trade deal, and the US will decide "whom we buy oil from". The interests of the farmers have been compromised, and they are facing a "storm" as agricultural products from the US will flood Indian markets. He also alleged that the Indian textile industry is "finished".

Rahul said PM Modi and NSA Ajit Doval had stated that the era of war is over. "But the fact is, we are moving into the era of war."

He underlined the need to protect country's people, data, food supply and energy system. The government itself has acknowledged that the world is facing a global storm, with the era of a single superpower coming to an end, intensifying geopolitical conflicts, and the weaponisation of energy and finance. Despite recognising this reality, the government has allowed the US to weaponise energy and financial systems in ways that affect India, the LoP alleged.

Rahul Gandhi wisest fool in Congressdom: BJP

Within minutes of Rahul Gandhi's remarks in Parliament on the India-US trade deal, the BJP launched a sharp counterattack, describing the Congress leader as the "wisest fool in Congressdom" and accusing him of dragging parliamentary decorum to its lowest level.

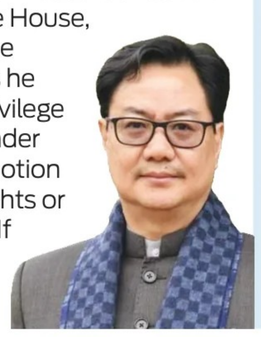
Gandhi had alleged that the government had "sold Bharat Mata" and termed the trade deal with Washington a "wholesale surrender", claiming it was meant to "protect the BJP's financial architecture, on which there is a case in the United States".

Addressing a press briefing shortly after Gandhi's speech in the Lok Sabha, BJP national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi said the Leader of the Opposition had lowered the standards of political discourse and parliamentary conduct.

He accused the Congress of repeatedly levelling "absurd and false allegations" against Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Govt to move privilege motion against Rahul: Rijiju

Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Wednesday said the government will move a privilege notice against Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi for allegedly misleading the House and making "baseless statements." Addressing the media, Rijiju said there are clear rules governing procedure and conduct of business in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. He noted that when a member intends to level serious charges or allegations against another member, prior notice must be given and a substantive motion moved in accordance with established norms. "On the floor of the House, I requested Rahul Gandhi to provide the necessary authentication of the points he has made, failing which a breach of privilege motion would be pursued," he said. Under parliamentary procedure, a privilege motion pertains to an alleged breach of the rights or immunities of Members or the House. If admitted, the matter may be referred to the Privileges Committee for investigation and recommendation.



WHAT TRIGGERED PRIVILEGE MOTION AGAINST RAHUL?

The privilege motion against Rahul Gandhi was triggered by his remarks in Parliament, where he claimed that Chinese troops were present on Indian soil, which was deemed misleading by BJP MPs. They accused him of distorting facts and attempting to undermine the country's prestige. This led to calls for strict action against him for spreading falsehoods.

'Play National Song before National Anthem'

NEW DELHI

'Vande Mataram', the national song, must be played before the national anthem, i.e., 'Jana, Gana, Mana' at all government events and in all schools, the Union Home Ministry said in new rules issued Wednesday morning. The new rules also require all persons to stand when 'Vande Mataram' is played.

The national song must now also be played at civilian awards ceremonies, like the Padma awards, and all other events attended by the President, during their arrival and departure. It will also be played in public spaces like cinema halls, though standing up is not mandatory in this instance.

And all six stanzas, including the four removed by the Congress in 1937, will be played.

Last month sources told NDTV the government planned to extend protocols covering the national anthem – under the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act – to 'Vande Mataram'.

And all six stanzas, including the four removed by the Congress in 1937, will be played.

UPTO 3-YR JAIL FOR DISRUTPION

And, under the law, any person who disrupts, or prevents others from respecting, the national anthem (and now the national song) can be sentenced to a maximum of three years in jail.

THE 'VANDE MATARAM' ROW

The directive, and the inclusion of those four stanzas, will likely kick up a row, particularly as there was a massive fight between the ruling BJP and the Congress on this topic last year. This was after Prime Minister Narendra Modi accused his predecessor, Jawaharlal Nehru, of having followed Muhammad Ali Jinnah in opposing the song because it could "irritate Muslims".

BIRLA ASKS LS SECRETARIAT TO FIX ERRORS IN OPPN NOTICE TO REMOVE HIM

NEW DELHI

"Flaws" have been found in the notice submitted by opposition MPs to remove the Lok Sabha speaker from office, with Om Birla directing the secretariat to amend the "defective" notice to prevent it from being rejected, Lok Sabha sources said on Wednesday.

As many as 118 opposition MPs had signed the notice submitted to Lok Sabha secretary general Utpal Kumar Singh on Tuesday afternoon. Later in the day, the opposition withdrew the notice and replaced it with another one correcting the date.

Lok Sabha sources said four instances of wrong date being mentioned were found, which could have led to the notice being dismissed under the rules.

However, Birla directed the Lok Sabha secretariat to get the defective notice amended and take action on it.

"Birla ordered prompt action as per the rules," a functionary said.

The notice will be listed after the start of the second phase of the Budget session from March 9.

Except Trump, nobody stated India's refusal to buy Russian oil: FM Lavrov

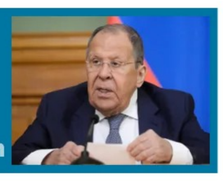
MOSCOW

Except US President Donald Trump, nobody else has declared that India will stop buying Russian oil, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told the country's parliament Wednesday.

His comments came two days after Russia accused the US of attempting to prevent India and other countries from buying Russian oil, saying Washington was using a wide range of "coercive" measures, including tariffs, sanctions and direct prohibitions.

On Wednesday, responding to a lawmaker in the State Duma (Lower House), Lavrov said, "You mentioned that Trump announced India's agreement to no longer purchase Russian oil. I have not heard such a statement from anyone else, including Prime Minister Modi and other Indian leaders."

Speaking during the Government Hour of the State Duma, he said, President Putin's state visit to India in December 2025 had further enriched relations between Moscow and New Delhi.



Historial political shift: BJP returns to BMC after 44 years with Ritu as mayor

MUMBAI

Amid chants of 'Jai Shree Ram...Jai Shree Ram', 'Modi...Modi' and 'Deva Bhau...Deva Bhau' - history was created in the iconic BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) headquarters as India's richest civic body got the second BJP Mayor in over four decade's time.

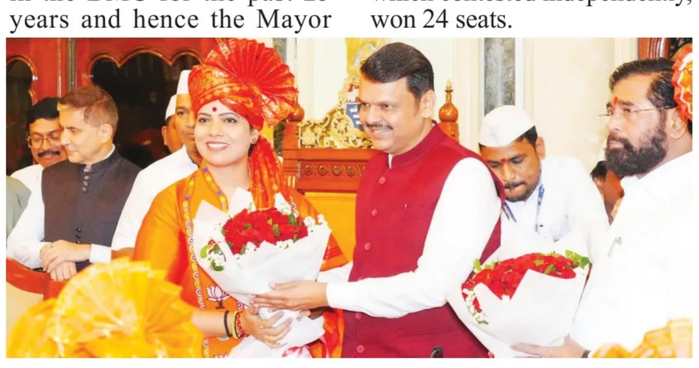
BJP's Ritu Tawde was elected unopposed as the Mayor of Mumbai. From 1982-83, Dr Prabhakar Pai of the BJP was the Mayor of Bombay, as the metropolis was then called - and came to occupy the post just after the 1980 formation of the BJP.

The undivided Thackeray-family led Shiv Sena has been in commanding position in the BMC for the past 25 years and hence the Mayor used to be from the Shiv Sena.

In fact, Dr Pai hailed from Barkur in Udupi district of Karnataka. Shiv Sena's Sanjay Ghadi was elected unopposed as the BMC's Deputy Mayor.

In the 227-member House, where the magic figure is 114, the BJP has emerged as the single largest party with 89 seats. Its ally, the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena, won 29 seats, taking the Maha Yuti tally to 118, while Ajit Pawar's NCP secured three seats.

On the opposition side, the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT) won 65 seats. Its allies — the Raj Thackeray-led MNS (six) and the Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP) (one) — take the Opposition bloc's strength to 72. The Congress, which contested independently, won 24 seats.



Siddu vows to respect high command on leadership row

BENGALURU

Expressing displeasure about repeated media queries on the leadership change issue in the state, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday asserted that he and his deputy DK Shivakumar should abide by the Congress high command's decision on the matter.

The CM also tried to play down reports about Congress legislators planning for a foreign tour, amid ongoing power tussle between him and Shivakumar for the CM post, saying he was not aware of it, and that they may be going personally by spending their own money.

"Can't you (media) ask anything other than this (leadership change issue)? You don't ask anything else, only this. It has been three months since you began this. Please don't ask me this again," a visibly upset Siddaramaiah told reporters.

When asked about former Congress MP and Shivakumar's brother DK Suresh's statement, with reference to the informal power-sharing pact that -- he is "still hopeful that, though delayed, the CM will keep his word," Siddaramaiah said "Ask those who make the statement. Why do you ask me? I will abide by the high command's decision."

He said, "Whether me or Shivakumar, we should abide by the high command's decision. The matter is left for the high command to decide. You (media) repeatedly ask the same thing. Don't you have anything else to ask?"

Shivakumar, ahead of leaving for New Delhi on Tuesday, said that he has "no confusion" over the leadership issue, as he and Siddaramaiah have discussed the matter in presence of the Congress high command.

To a query on the state budget, he said, "I will announce the date after the festival (Shivaratri which is on February 15)." Siddaramaiah, who also holds the finance portfolio, is holding a series of pre-budget meetings with various departments. The 2026-27 Budget is likely to be presented in March, according to official sources. This would be Siddaramaiah's record 17th budget.

'US used Pak like toilet paper'

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has made one of the starkest admissions of Islamabad's past alignment with the United States, accusing Washington of "exploiting" the Southeast Asian nation for its strategic interests and then discarding it "like a piece of toilet paper" after its objectives were met. Speaking in Pakistan's National Assembly, Asif admitted that Pakistan often denies its terror history, calling it a "mistake committed by dictators in the past."

He termed Islamabad's involvement in two Afghan wars 'a mistake,' saying that the terrorism in Pakistan today was the blowback of past mistakes.

'EXILED' VOICE

'Jihadis are in power': Taslima slams Yunus

NEW DELHI

On the eve of Bangladesh's elections, exiled writer Taslima Nasrin has delivered her most blistering critique in years of the country's political direction, accusing the Muhammad Yunus-led interim dispensation of empowering Islamic fundamentalists, presiding over widespread violence, and allowing democracy to collapse into what she calls a dangerous "use of elections to establish theocracy".

"I don't know that Bangladesh anymore," Nasrin told NDTV's Senior Executive Editor Aditya Raj Kaul in a wide-ranging exclusive interview. "Jihadis are in power. I should say Islamic fundamentalists were brought to power. And almost every day there is more violence-attacks on minorities, attacks on opposition party members, attacks on liberal voices."

Speaking from exile in India, where she has lived for over three decades, Nasrin painted a grim picture of a country she says has been overtaken by fear and lawlessness under Yunus, who currently heads the administration as chief adviser. "Journalists are imprisoned though they committed no crime. Opposition party members are in prison, though they committed no crime. But there is no action against the jihadists and fundamentalists. They walk free," she said.

Nasrin alleged systematic destruction of Bangladesh's cultural and historical symbols. "Statues of freedom fighters were destroyed. Newspaper offices were demolished. Cultural organisations were burned to ashes. And hardly any action was taken against the criminals, because they are fundamentalists and fundamentalists support the regime."

QUICK READ

Man arrested for stealing from sister's workplace

Bengaluru
In Basavanagudi, a 31-year-old man, Sharath Kumar from Uttarahalli, was arrested for stealing gold, silver, and cash from a house where his elder sister had been working for 25 years. The theft occurred when the house owner, a software engineer, was away. Sharath, struggling to pay his car EMI, used the key given to the housekeeper, his grandmother, to commit the crime. Basavanagudi police recovered 241 grams of gold, 2.8 kg of silver, and Rs. 1.30 lakh, worth around Rs. 36 lakh. His grandmother was confirmed to have no involvement in the theft.

Leopard sightings create fear in Anjanapura

Bengaluru
Residents of Anjanapura in south Bengaluru are living in fear as a leopard has been frequently spotted in their area over the past two weeks. The animal has attacked dogs and startled people, making locals hesitant to leave their homes, especially in the evenings. Auto drivers and delivery personnel are avoiding the area, and women are no longer walking alone. The forest department has set traps to catch the leopard, but so far the animal, reportedly tamed for four years, has avoided capture. Residents are urgently appealing to authorities to remove the leopard to restore safety in the neighborhood.

Newborn baby found abandoned in garbage dump

Bengaluru
A newborn baby boy's body was discovered in a garbage heap on Seshadripuram Main Road, prompting police to register a case. The Hoysala patrol staff responded after receiving a report from Balakrishna Nayak, GBA Marshal, who alerted authorities through the 112 control room.
Police officials, led by PSI Jagadish S., conducted a preliminary inspection and found the baby's body in a decomposed and swollen condition. The umbilical cord was still attached, suggesting the child had been recently born.
Authorities suspect that the baby may have been abandoned by the parents or other unidentified individuals, possibly to hide the birth or avoid social and legal consequences. The Hoysala-4 police have registered an FIR and are investigating the incident.

North Corporation Launches Weekly Citizen Phone-In Programme

Residents can raise complaints on roads, streetlights, garbage, stray dogs, parks, e-Khata, trees, encroachments, and unauthorised posters

BENGALURU

The Bengaluru North City Corporation has introduced a weekly Phone-In Programme to directly hear public grievances and improve civic services in its jurisdiction. The initiative has been launched by North City Corporation Commissioner Pommala Sunil Kumar with the aim of strengthening communication between citizens and the civic body. As part of the programme, the Commissioner will personally interact with residents every Friday. This week's Phone-In Programme will be held on Friday, February 13, 2026, between 7 am and 9 am. During this time, citizens can call and share their concerns related to everyday civic problems affecting their neighbourhoods.

Residents can raise issues such as potholes and road repairs, malfunctioning streetlights, door-to-door garbage collection, waste disposal, and mosquito control. Complaints related to the removal of dangerous trees and branches, stray dog control, development and maintenance of parks, and the clearing of encroachments on footpaths can also be discussed. In addition, citizens can seek help on matters related to e-Khata and report unauthorised banners and posters in public places.

All grievances received during the Phone-In Programme will be officially recorded on the "Sahaaya 2.0" portal. The complaints will then be forwarded to the concerned departmental officers for immediate action. Citizens will receive SMS updates with details of their complaint registration and information about the responsible officers handling the issue. For participating in the programme, citizens can contact the control room through mobile or WhatsApp at 9480685705. Landline numbers 080-22975936 and 080-23636671 are also available. Complaints can also be submitted anytime through the Sahaaya 2.0 mobile application. The corporation hopes the programme will ensure quicker solutions and better civic services.

Grand Shivratri vigil planned in Kengeri suburb

KENGERI

A special Rasa Manjari programme will feature night-long vigil for devotees, with performances by renowned Vijay Prakash and folk singer Savitakka, enhancing devotional and cultural celebrations

Preparations are underway to celebrate Shivratri Vigil on February 15 in Kengeri suburb, with special arrangements being made for devotees to witness the Shivalinga Divya Darshan. Local MLA S. T. Somashekhar said the Shivalinga has been designed on the lines of the famous Kedarnath Shivalinga, keeping the deep faith of devotees in mind.

He was speaking at a preliminary meeting held at Ganesh Playground in Kengeri, where officials and community leaders discussed arrangements for the event. The MLA said more than 25,000 devotees are expected to attend the Shivratri celebrations. He assured that proper arrangements would be made to ensure a smooth and safe darshan for everyone, without any political or social differences. To avoid any inconvenience, police personnel, GBA staff, and BESCOM officials have been instructed to remain alert and coordinate closely throughout the event. Devotees visiting the venue will be offered prasad, Rudraksha garlands, and tambittu. Cultural programmes have also been planned to enhance the spiritual experience of the night-long vigil.

A special Rasa Manjari programme will be held for devotees who observe the vigil throughout the night. Renowned singer Vijay Prakash and popular folk singer Savitakka will perform during the programme, adding a devotional and cultural touch to the celebrations. In another announcement, Somashekhar said an STS Cup 2026 cricket tournament will be organised across all 17 Gram Panchayats and 12 wards of the Yeshwantpur Assembly constituency. Prize money of Rs 5 lakh, Rs 3 lakh, and Rs 1 lakh has been announced for the top three teams. Former BBMP members, Zilla Panchayat representatives, local leaders, and officials attended the meeting and extended support for the event.

He said Indian agriculture supports millions with limited resources, unlike highly mechanised, large-scale farming in the US

AAP opposes India-US trade agreement

BENGALURU

The Aam Aadmi Party strongly opposed the proposed India–United States trade agreement, calling it a serious threat to the livelihood of Indian farmers. Addressing a press conference, party working president Sitaram Gundappa said the agreement would harm the country's agriculture sector, which supports crores of small and marginal farmers.

He said agriculture has always been the backbone of India's economy, with nearly 85 to 90 crore people directly or indirectly dependent on farming. Indian farmers, he said, work with limited resources and minimal mechanisation, yet contribute significantly to food security. In contrast, he pointed out that agriculture in the US is highly mechanised and carried out on a very large scale.

Gundappa alleged that under the proposed agreement, agricultural products from the US would enter Indian markets at zero or very low

import duty. This, he warned, would flood the market with cheaper foreign produce and leave Indian farmers unable to get fair prices for their crops. He claimed that American farm products worth over Rs 45 lakh crore could enter India, creating unequal competition. He further alleged that while Indian farmers would have to pay high tariffs to export their produce to the US, American farmers would get easy access to Indian markets. This, he said, amounted to a betrayal of Indian farmers by the central government. State Organising Secretary Dr Satish Kumar said India should focus on importing advanced technology instead of agricultural products that hurt local farmers. He added that cheap imports of items like soybean oil would badly affect Indian producers.

The party announced statewide protests against the agreement and said it would fully support farmers' movements. A protest has been planned at Independence Park on February 15 to oppose the deal.

Two children killed in school bus collision

BENGALURU

A tragic accident claimed the lives of two young children after a school bus collided with a scooter near Thanisandra police quarters on Wednesday morning. The victims, girls aged two and four, were run over when the bus hit the stopped two-wheeler. The scooter was being driven by Naganagowda, a constable of the Armed Reserve Force (CAAR), who was taking his two-year-old daughter and four-year-old nephew to buy milk at around 8:16 am. According to reports, a private school bus, driven by Mareppan, attempted a U-turn and struck the stationary scooter, causing the children to fall under the bus wheels. Despite being rushed to the hospital with severe head injuries, both children died. Their bodies have been sent to Yelahanka Government Hospital for post-mortem examination. Police have taken the bus driver into custody and are questioning him. A case of reckless and negligent driving has been registered, and the Hennur Traffic Police are investigating.

Bengaluru records over sixty thousand dog bites in 3 years

BENGALURU

Stray dog attacks continue to trouble Bengaluru and other districts in Karnataka, with over 60,000 people bitten in the last three years, according to government data. The rising incidents have sparked public concern, especially after a recent case where a toddler was attacked by stray dogs in the city.

Between 2023 and 2025, Bengaluru alone reported 63,853 dog bite cases. The yearly breakdown shows 21,163 cases in 2023, 18,198 in 2024, and 24,492 cases in 2025 so far. Other districts also recorded significant numbers, including Mysuru with 9,902 cases, Dharwad 9,303, Haveri 3,441, Belagavi 2,692, and smaller numbers in Kolar, Chitradurga, Hassan, and Dakshina Kannada, bringing the total outside Bengaluru to 26,395 cases.

The Karnataka government has faced criticism for failing to effectively control the stray dog menace, prompting the formation of a review committee to monitor cases and provide compensation to victims. Over the past three years, the government disbursed Rs 17.80 lakh in compensation. Families of deceased victims receive Rs 5 lakh, while injured individuals are given Rs 5,000 each. Of this, Rs 3,500 is given directly to victims, and Rs 1,500 is credited to the Suvarna Arogya Suraksha Trust for medical expenses. Authorities have urged citizens to report stray dog incidents promptly, while vaccination and sterilisation drives are being intensified to curb the menace. Despite these efforts, residents continue to demand faster, more effective action to prevent attacks and ensure public safety in Bengaluru and across the state.

Scammers Use Fake Apps to Cheat Traders

BENGALURU

A gang of fraudsters in Bengaluru has been duping shopkeepers and business owners using fake digital payment apps. The scammers, often wearing masks, trick victims by scanning QR codes and showing fake transaction confirmations. Hotels, mobile shops, and eateries have been targeted. In Yelahanka New Town, several incidents were reported, including scams at Vinayak Mobile Shop, Shahid Biryani Centre, and Dinesh Mobile Shop. At Vinayak Mobile Shop, the gang purchased goods worth ₹7,000 using a fake PhonePe app. The shop owner discovered that the payment had not been credited.

Kempegowda Airport launches smart passenger experience

BENGALURU

Kempegowda International Airport (KIA), operated by BIAL, has taken a major step to improve passenger experience by partnering with global decision science company Mu Sigma. The new collaboration aims to make the airport more customer-friendly and efficient using advanced data-driven solutions. Under this partnership, Mu Sigma will use artificial intelligence (AI) to analyze airport operations in real time. This analysis will help make every passenger interaction smoother, from check-in to boarding, by predicting needs and improving services. The AI system will combine operational data

from various airport functions and provide insights to manage crowd flow, reduce waiting times, and ensure better service at restaurants, shops, and parking areas.

The initiative focuses on transforming KIA into more than just a transit hub. The goal is to create a complete experience center for travelers where convenience, comfort, and safety are prioritized. Passengers can expect smarter processes, intuitive facilities, and faster response times at every touchpoint. George Fantham, Chief Technology Officer of BIAL, said, "We are committed to redefining the airport experience. Our collaboration with Mu Sigma marks a significant milestone in this journey." The move comes as airports worldwide are adopting technology to enhance traveler satisfaction and operational efficiency. By integrating predictive analytics and AI-driven decision-making, KIA aims to ensure that passengers spend less time waiting and more time enjoying airport services. This partnership is expected to set new standards in passenger care and operational excellence.

ZOOM–DEF PARTNERSHIP

Zoom expands digital inclusion efforts in Karnataka

BENGALURU

Zoom Communications has expanded its partnership with the Digital Empowerment Foundation to improve digital access in remote and underserved parts of Karnataka. The move strengthens Zoom's focus on digital inclusion, economic opportunity, and meaningful human connection across India.

Under the initiative, 55 community-led Digital Access Centers will be set up across the state. These centers will work as local hubs where people can

access the internet, learn digital skills, and use online tools for business and daily needs. More than 16,500 micro-entrepreneurs and artisans are expected to receive training, while over 110,000 citizens will benefit from better digital access.

The program builds on similar efforts earlier carried out in Telangana and Madhya Pradesh. In Karnataka, special attention will be given to artisans and small business owners linked to Geographical Indication tagged products. Through training in digital marketing, online storytelling, and virtual collaboration, participants will learn how to reach wider markets while protecting local traditions.

People using the centers will be trained to use digital platforms, including Zoom's AI-based work tools, to create online stores, connect with customers, and grow their income. The goal is to help local communities take part confidently in India's fast-growing digital economy.

The Digital Empowerment Foundation, founded in 2002, works through a strong grassroots network led by women social entrepreneurs called SoochnaPreneurs. The organisation has reached over 10,000 villages

Kannada Catholics Question Silence of Church Leadership

BENGALURU

The Akhila Karnataka Katholic Kristara Kannada Sangha has strongly criticised the continued silence of Church leadership in India over the concerns of Kannada Catholics in Karnataka. In a press statement issued in Bengaluru, the organisation expressed deep disappointment with the attitude of senior Church bodies, including the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India and the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India.
The Sangha said that despite repeated appeals and representations, Church leaders have failed to listen to the genuine issues faced by Kannada-speaking Catholics. It alleged that many leaders remain distant from ground realities and behave like outsiders rather than pastors rooted among local communities. This silence, the statement said, reflects a serious failure of pastoral responsibility.

According to the Sangha, the Church in Karnataka is facing an internal imbalance of power. Leadership structures, it claimed, continue to be dominated by elite coastal groups, while local Kannadigas and other marginalised communities are sidelined. This has weakened trust among believers and affected the Church's mission in the state.

QUICK READ

Father-in-law booked for sexually harassing daughter

Bengaluru

RT Nagar police have registered an FIR against Abdul Hafeez, a father-in-law and founder of an educational institution, for allegedly sexually harassing his daughter-in-law. The victim accused Hafeez of writing letters praising her beauty and reading them aloud in her presence, causing severe distress. She claimed he exploited moments when she was alone at home to molest her. Despite informing her husband, who scolded his father, the harassment persisted unabated. The woman finally approached authorities, leading to a case under relevant harassment laws. RT Nagar police are investigating the allegations.

Bengaluru rent debate sparks over poor infrastructure

Bengaluru

A social media post by Lubna Malhotra has sparked debate over high rents in Koramangala, where a 2BHK flat is being listed for ₹70,000 despite open drains, potholes, and damaged roads. Residents and netizens questioned whether such rent is justified given the poor infrastructure, while others blamed the growing migrant population for driving prices up. Koramangala, close to cafes, tech hubs, and malls, remains a prime location, but complaints about traffic and unsafe roads persist. The post received mixed reactions, highlighting Bengaluru's widening gap between rental costs and living conditions.

CID LAUNCHES SEARCH FOR ABSCONDING BJP MLA

This isn't the MLA's first disappearance; he absconded in December 2025 after limited relief under KCOCA

BENGALURU

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has launched an intensive search for BJP MLA and former minister Byrathi Basavaraj after the Karnataka High Court rejected his plea for anticipatory bail in the realtor 'Bikla' Shiva murder case. Multiple special teams have been formed to trace his whereabouts, but officials said no major breakthrough had been made till late Tuesday night.

Byrathi Basavaraj, who represents the K.R. Puram constituency, has reportedly gone missing following the court order. CID officials confirmed that teams are searching for him in Bengaluru and other locations outside the city. Investigators have also questioned several of his close associates to gather information about his possible movements and hiding places. This is not the first time the MLA has gone underground. In December 2025, during the Winter Session of the Legislature held in Belagavi, he had similarly absconded after the High Court granted him limited relief from the Karnataka Control of Organised Crime Act, 2000.

At that time, the court directed him to approach the sessions court for anticipatory bail. While the CID searched for him, he remained out of reach. Later, when the sessions court rejected his bail plea, he challenged the decision in the High Court, which granted him temporary protection from arrest until the final order. That protection ended on Tuesday with the High Court dismissing his anticipatory bail request.

CID sources said there is a possibility that Byrathi Basavaraj may approach the Supreme Court seeking relief against the High Court's decision. Officials believe he may continue to remain absconding until he gets legal protection from the apex court. The case has drawn significant public attention, with questions being raised about accountability and the rule of law. The CID has stated that efforts to trace and arrest the MLA will continue without interruption.

Karnataka pushes for drug-free campuses statewide

Dr. Parameshwara urged forming anti-drug committees in 1,500 RGUHS colleges, warning of license revocation, citing ongoing drug inflow despite large seizures

BENGALURU

Karnataka Home Minister Dr. G. Parameshwara urged everyone to unite to make the state drug-free, warning that it should not follow Punjab's path. Speaking at the "Drug-Free India, Drug-Free Play, Drug-Free Campus" and organ donation campaign organised by Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences (RGUHS) on Wednesday, he highlighted the importance of colleges leading the fight against drug abuse.

Dr. Parameshwara stressed that anti-drug committees should be formed in all 1,500 health science colleges under RGUHS. He warned that licenses could be revoked for institutions ignoring this initiative. He also noted that despite crores of rupees worth of drugs being seized and destroyed, fresh consignments continue to enter the state, often via foreign students.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao announced plans to strengthen organ storage and transplantation units in government hospitals. Karnataka ranks third nationally in organ donation pledges, and awareness campaigns are underway to encourage families to donate organs.

Vice-Chancellor Dr. Bhagwan B.C. said over 7,000 staff and students have pledged organ donation in just a few months, contributing 13% of the state's total donors. Walkathons and awareness campaigns have already reached nine districts, involving over 40,000 students and 250 colleges.

Dr. Parameshwara and RGUHS officials also highlighted programs addressing mental health, women's safety, and child health, including breast screening, HPV vaccination, and cancer awareness. Vidhan Sabha Speaker Basavaraj Horatti added that preventing drug use must begin at home, with families playing a key role.

The campaign aims to combine education, awareness, and community action to ensure colleges and society are free from drugs while promoting social responsibility and health consciousness.

Mr. Rao ordered immediate removal of hazardous branches, fallen trunks, and obstructions to ensure footpath and traffic safety

GBA orders drive to remove dangerous trees

BENGALURU

The Greater Bengaluru Authority Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao has ordered an immediate operation to clear dangerous trees across the GBA area to ensure public safety before the monsoon.

He issued the directions during a coordination meeting with departments working under the GBA limits at the headquarters hall.

Forest department officials were instructed to identify risky trees within the limits of the city's five municipal corporations and remove them without delay. Mr. Rao said branches that block traffic signals, lean over roads, obstruct streetlights, or pose danger to people walking on footpaths must be cut and cleared at once. He also ordered the removal of fallen tree trunks and branches lying on footpaths to avoid accidents.

The Chief Commissioner directed that applications submitted by departments seeking permission for road cutting through the online 'Marks' system should be cleared immediately.

He said departments must complete road cutting work within the approved time and restore the roads with quality.

On pedestrian flyovers, he instructed urban corporations to begin construction wherever feasible and complete pending works related to shifting bus stands to reduce traffic congestion.

Ahead of the rainy season, Mr. Rao referred to a list submitted by traffic police identifying waterlogging points. He said steps must be taken to prevent rainwater stagnation across all areas.

IT employee works as rapido driver to meet expenses

BENGALURU

The rising cost of living in Bengaluru has forced even IT professionals to take up part-time work. A viral social media post revealed that a PhonePe sales manager drives a Rapido bike at night, despite having a corporate job and a flat in the city. The incident sparked discussions about high rents, EMIs, and daily expenses that push employees to multitask. Netizens called it a sign of economic strain and "burnout culture" in Bengaluru, highlighting the pressures faced by urban workers. Many argued that such dual jobs reflect the struggle to maintain a decent standard of living in the city.

Shri Siddaramaiah
Hon'ble Chief Minister
Government of Karnataka

Shri D.K. Shivakumar
Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister
Government of Karnataka

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA
TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT PUBLICATION

ಸಾರಿಗೆ ಇಲಾಖೆ
TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT

Shri Ramalinga Reddy
Hon'ble Minister for Transport & Muzrai,
Government of Karnataka

In accordance with Rule 125 (C) of the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989, all regular buses and sleeper coach buses registered in the State shall mandatorily comply with the provisions to implement the following safety measures :

- AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY STANDARD
- CODE OF PRACTICE FOR BUS BODY DESIGN AND APPROVAL AIS-052/AIS-153
- REQUIREMENTS FOR SLEEPER COACH BUSES AIS-119
- PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM

01 The partition door installed behind the driver in all sleeper coach buses registered in the State shall be removed

02 Sliders fitted to sleeper berths in all sleeper coach buses shall be removed

03 All sleeper coach buses registered on or after 01-04-2019 shall be equipped with a Fire Detection and Suppression System (FDSS)

04 In contravention of the provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 and the Rules made there under transportation of commercial goods in passenger buses including sleeper coach buses is strictly prohibited

05 Operation of buses constructed by unauthorized extension of chassis shall be discontinued forthwith

06 Every bus shall have a design layout drawing indicating emergency exits location of fire extinguishers, and roof hatches affixed inside the vehicle at a place easily visible and readable to passengers

07 As per the standards prescribed under Bus Body Code AIS:119, Buses up to 12 metres in length shall have a minimum of four (4) emergency exits and Buses exceeding 12 metres in length shall have a minimum of five (5) emergency exits

08 In buses constructed with body structure conforming to AIS:052 and AIS:119, luggage carriers provided on the roof and ladders shall be removed

09 All sleeper coach buses shall be fitted with fire extinguishers of minimum capacity of 10 kilograms

10 Bus body building agencies shall possess a valid certificate under Rule 126 of the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989 and only vehicles manufactured by such certified agencies shall be registered

11 Vehicles will be registered only after verification of the certificate forms 22 and 22A issued by the approved testing agencies

It is hereby notified that failure to comply with the above directions on or before 28-02-2026 shall attract strict action under the provisions of Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 and the Rules framed thereunder against the vehicle owners concerned.

Sd/-
Commissioner
Transport & Road Safety

EARLY SUMMER WATER CRISIS HITS KARNATAKA VILLAGES

Hullahalli villagers face six-month water shortage, affecting residents and livestock; protests followed ignored appeals to officials

MYSURU

Several villages across Karnataka are facing a severe drinking water crisis even before the onset of summer, forcing residents to protest against authorities for immediate relief.

In Hullahalli village of Nanjangud taluk in Mysuru district, people in wards six and seven have been struggling for drinking water for the past six to seven months. The shortage has affected both residents and livestock. Villagers alleged that repeated appeals to the Gram Panchayat Development Officer have failed to bring any solution. Despite the Kapila river flowing near the village, households are forced to depend on scarce and irregular water supply. Angry residents blocked the gram panchayat office and locked it in protest.

Villager Kashi Javaranayaka said officials were ignoring their pleas and questioned how government funds meant for basic facilities were being used. The PDO later stated that the issue had been reported to higher authorities and assured that steps would be taken, after which the protest was withdrawn.

A similar situation is seen in Gollarahatti village of Jagalur taluk in Davanagere district, where people have been facing water shortage for eight to nine months. Villagers protested in front of the taluk panchayat holding buckets, alleging that water is supplied only once a week for two hours. With one tap serving nearly forty houses, disputes over water have become common.

Meanwhile, in Vijayapura district, farmers suffered heavy losses after a canal under the Mulwad Lift Irrigation Project breached near Gennur village.

Flooding damaged crops on several acres, washing away fertile soil. Farmers demanded compensation, blaming official negligence for the losses and delays.

JDS demands probe into SUDA nepotism allegations

SHIVAMOGGA

The District Janata Dal (Secular) held a protest in front of the District Collector's office, accusing the Shivamogga-Bhadravati Urban Development Authority (SUDA) of corruption and nepotism. Party leaders submitted a petition demanding a fair and detailed investigation into the authority's works carried out after the Congress government came to power on May 20, 2023.

JDS leaders alleged that SUDA, which is meant to develop Shivamogga and Bhadravati and help site aspirants get plots, has misused public money. They claimed that tax funds were wasted through poor-quality work, false bills, and unscientific planning. Despite complaints already filed by two contractors with the SUDA Commissioner, the District Collector, and the Lokayukta, no proper inquiry has been conducted so far.

The party pointed out earlier irregularities in the allotment of plots at Vajpayee Layout. A report by retired Justice Ravindranath and a Lokayukta probe had earlier exposed corruption and helped eligible applicants get justice. Similar problems are now being seen in new layouts, including Orugadur, causing hardship to plot seekers.

JDS leaders alleged SUDA misused public funds through poor-quality work, false bills, and unscientific planning; despite complaints, no proper inquiry has been conducted so far

JDS leaders also alleged shocking practices such as soil being removed from private contractor sites for road works and garbage being dumped into those pits. They further accused SUDA of corruption in tender processes for roads, drains, culverts, and parks. Complaints by contractors Gurusai and Basavaraj have reportedly found preliminary proof.

Former MLA K.B. Prasannakumar said most questioned works were done during the current SUDA president's term. He demanded an investigation into over 91 projects, punishment for the guilty, and recovery of misused funds for the authority.

QUICK READ

Gadag district planning meeting scheduled on Feb 17

Gadag

The Gadag District Planning Committee will hold a key meeting on February 17 at 11 a.m. in the Zilla Panchayat Hall. Dr. H.K. Patil, State Minister for Law, Justice, Human Rights, Parliamentary Affairs, Legislation, Tourism, and District In-charge Minister, will chair the session. The meeting aims to discuss development plans and important district projects. The Chief Executive Officer of the Zilla Panchayat and the Member Secretary of the Gadag District Planning Committee confirmed the schedule in an official statement. Officials urged committee members and concerned authorities to attend and participate actively in shaping the district's future initiatives.

Veer Rani Abbakka festival scheduled on February 14

ULLAL

The Veer Rani Abbakka Festival 2025-26 will be held on Saturday, February 14, at 2 pm at Ambedkar Theatre, Thokkottu Olpet, announced Dinakar Ullal, President of the Abbakka Festival Committee.

The festival will be inaugurated by Anita Surendra Kumar. Dr. Asha Jyoti Rai, President of Asha Charitable Trust, Mangalore, will open the literary and cultural programs. The event will feature a range of performances, including a folk song festival by the Swaramadhurya team led by Yashaswini Ullal, a duff performance by the Al Azaria Duff team with Karnataka Beary Sahitya Academy, cultural programs by Yuvahini Kolya unit, family dance with Karnataka Konkani Sahitya Academy, comedy variety by Swara Kaup team, and a welcome dance by Vidushi Reshma Nirmal Bhatt's Paziru Nritya Lahari Natyalayam team.

A public program will start at 5 pm, presided over by Speaker U.T. Khader Farid. Dr. M.N. Rajendra Kumar, President of Mangalore SCDCC Bank, will present awards. Former Chief Minister D.V. Sadananda Gowda and D.K. MP Captain Brijesh Chowta will also participate.

Veer Rani Abbakka Awards will be presented to Dr. Saigeetha Hegde for literary achievements and Rajshree Ullal for Bharatanatyam excellence. Felicitation will be delivered by Dr. K. Chinnappa Gowda, retired Vice-Chancellor of Haveri University.

The event will be attended by key dignitaries, including Joachim Spani Alvaris, Ummer U.H, Dr. U.T. Iftikhar Farid, Sadashiva Ullal, and Mamata D.S. Gatti, alongside the festival committee members.

Sridhar urged proper garbage disposal to control stray dogs, directing collection in closed bins and threatening strict fines

District orders strong steps to control stray dogs

GADAG

Deputy Commissioner C.N. Sridhar has directed officials to take immediate and coordinated action to control the growing stray dog problem in Gadag district. He was speaking while presiding over a review meeting held at the Deputy Commissioner's Office Hall.

The Deputy Commissioner said the main objective of the administration is to remove fear and anxiety among the public while addressing the stray dog issue in a humane manner. He noted that the increasing number of stray dogs has become a serious concern in both rural and urban areas of the district. To tackle the problem effectively, he instructed concerned departments to implement a coordinated Animal Birth Control programme without delay.

Emphasising the role of waste management, Sridhar said improper disposal of garbage is a major reason for the rise in stray dog population. He directed officials to ensure proper garbage collection across the district. Waste generated in markets, hotels, meat shops, and public places must be collected in closed bins instead of being dumped openly. He warned that strict fines will be imposed on commercial establishments that violate these waste management rules.

The meeting also discussed various problems caused by stray dogs, including public safety concerns and hygiene issues. Officials reviewed steps needed to prevent dog bites and accidents, especially in residential areas and near schools. The need to open shelters for stray dogs and ensure their proper care and treatment was also discussed in detail.

The Deputy Commissioner called for coordination between local bodies, health departments, and animal welfare authorities to ensure effective implementation of the measures. He stressed that public cooperation is also essential for long-term solutions.

Officials present at the meeting included GP Deputy Secretary C.R. Mundaragi, Urban Development Cell Project Director Basanagouda Kotura, Gadag-Betageri Municipal Council Commissioner Rajarama Pawara, District Health and Family Welfare Officer Dr S.S. Neelgund, along with officers and staff from various departments.

Activist begins hunger strike against tractor noise

BELAGAVI

A hunger strike was launched in front of the Belagavi District Collector's office demanding the removal of illegal loudspeakers installed on tractors and other vehicles in rural areas. Social activist Srinivas Gowda Patil began the fast, stating that uncontrolled noise pollution has become a serious threat to public safety and peace.

Patil said loud and harsh music played through illegally fixed sound boxes is disturbing children, students, senior citizens, and the general public. He alleged that obscene songs being played on village roads cause discomfort to women and distract drivers, leading to accidents. According to him, many drivers fail to notice vehicles coming from behind or even ambulances due to excessive noise.

He claimed that despite repeated appeals to transport authorities, the district administration, and the regional commissioner, no strict action has been taken. As a result, he decided to sit on a hunger strike, consuming only water, until the demand is met.

Speaking to the media, Patil alleged that nearly 800 people have lost their lives in road accidents in Belagavi district and blamed negligence by transport officials for failing to enforce safety rules. He demanded the immediate removal of illegal loudspeakers and suspension of five Assistant Regional Transport Officers for dereliction of duty. He also sought criminal cases against officials responsible for ignoring violations.

Several social leaders and farmer organisation members extended support to the protest.

Responding to the issue, District Superintendent of Police K. Ramarajan said noise pollution from tractors has caused serious problems. He said police have seized around 300 sound boxes during a special drive over the past 15 days and warned that the operation will be intensified further. He cautioned that under the Motor Vehicles Act and Environment Protection Act, violators could face imprisonment up to five years and a fine of Rs 1 lakh. He urged vehicle owners to remove illegal sound systems immediately to avoid strict legal action.

Students must build strong self-confidence: Nandini

MANDYA

Chief Executive Officer K. R. Nandini urged students to maintain self-confidence and focus on their goals during a motivational workshop for SSLC students. The "I Will Achieve" workshop was held at the Parivartana Residential School and PU College in Srirangapatna, organized by the District Administration and Zilla Panchayat School Education Department.

Nandini emphasized that students should study with full concentration. He also encouraged teachers to boost students' confidence, helping them perform better in government schools and become role models in society. "Teachers play a key role in guiding students to achieve good results, and their dedication reflects in students' success," he said.

The workshop highlighted the importance of academic focus and self-belief. Officials including Deputy Director of Public Education G. Lokesh, Kannada and Culture Department B. V. Nandish, and former Zilla Panchayat President Linganna were present, supporting efforts to strengthen both student performance and teacher guidance in local schools.

Sufi Sam community seeks justice from govt

HUNSUR

Members of the Sufi Sam and Durvesh community have demanded that the present government address their long-pending issues and restore benefits that were earlier provided to them. They expressed disappointment over continued neglect by successive governments and urged authorities to take corrective steps in the coming budget.

Speaking at a press meet held at the Journalists' Association office in Hunsur, Suman, Taluk President of the Sufi Sam Committee, said the community has not received any government grants for years. He stated that earlier governments had recognised Sufi Sam and Durvesh communities and issued identity cards during the tenure of former Chief Minister D. Devaraj Urs. These cards helped families access education, health services, bus passes, and other welfare schemes.

However, he alleged that the BJP government led by B.S. Yediyurappa cancelled these identity cards, after which no government has restored the benefits. He said the present Congress government should pay attention to their demands and include welfare provisions for the community in the next state budget.

Vice President Syed Abbas said the previous government had opposed the establishment of a Muslim University in Srirangapatna. He urged the current government to reconsider the proposal, establish the university, and name it after former President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. He also demanded that pending housing funds meant for poor beneficiaries be released immediately. Another Vice President, Fayaz Ahmed, highlighted concerns about Urdu education. He said Urdu is taught only up to Class 5 in government Urdu lower primary schools, after which students are forced to discontinue. He appealed to the government to continue Urdu education beyond Class 5 in line with the curriculum.

Roshan Ali Ghaffar also addressed the press conference. Secretary Sanaullah, Chief Qalandar, and other community leaders were present and extended support to the demands.

Police seek family of unidentified man found

MANDYA

The Mandya West Police are searching for the family of an unidentified man whose body was discovered near Gandhi Park auto stand, close to Mahaveer Circle on Mysore Main Road. The deceased is estimated to be around 50 years old, about 5.2 feet tall, of average build, wearing a yellow T-shirt and black pants. Authorities have registered a complaint and are urging anyone with information about the man's heirs to come forward. People with details can contact the Mandya West Police at 0821224500 or 0823211488, said the Sub-Inspector in an official statement.

KAMPLI JOY FEST

Kampli festival brings color, culture together

BALLARI

The town of Kampli is glowing with colors and celebration as the much-awaited Kampli festival begun on February 11 till 12. In a beautiful display of tradition, 132 colorful rangoli designs made by women decorate one side of the road, stretching from the Irrigation Department office to Kammavari Bhavan. The artwork has added charm and festive spirit to the streets.

The festival is organized by the District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, and the Kannada and Culture Department. The main inauguration will take place at 6 pm on February 12 at the Gandugali Kumara Rama Vedike, located at the Sundari Sugar Factory Grounds in Kampli town.

Housing, Waqf and Minority Welfare Minister and Ballari District In-charge Minister B.Z. Zameer Ahmed Khan will inaugurate the event. Backward Classes Welfare and Kannada and Culture Minister S. Shivaraj Thangadgi will attend as a special guest.

Kampli MLA J.N. Ganesh, who is also President of the Karnataka State Cooperative Handloom Weavers' Federation Limited, will preside. The festival promises cultural programs, unity, and joy for everyone.

QUICK READ

Three women sentenced for teen trafficking

Chikkaballapur

A court in Chikkaballapur has sentenced three women to seven years in prison for forcing a 19-year-old teenager into prostitution. The victim, a child marriage survivor facing financial hardship, was lured with a fake beauty parlour job, taken from Chikkaballapur to Bengaluru and then Delhi, and sold for ₹3 lakh. She was confined in a brothel and subjected to sexual exploitation. After two months, she escaped and filed a complaint with the Women Police Station. The court fined the convicts between ₹7,000 and ₹15,000. The investigation was overseen by SP Kushal Chowksi, with prosecution led by Zahida Banu D.K.

Job fair opens doors for veterans

Chitradurga

A special job fair for ex-servicemen will be held on February 27 at the Madras Engineering Group and Center in Bengaluru. The event is being organized with support from the Directorate General Resettlement to help former soldiers find suitable jobs after service. Interested veterans can attend the fair directly by carrying their ex-servicemen identity card and five copies of their biodata. Officials said the fair aims to connect them with employers. For more information, they can call 020-26341217 or 011-20863432, or email drzspne@desw.gov.in or seopadgr@desw.gov.in for guidance and support.

Power cut in Hiriyur for maintenance

Chitradurga

Residents of Hiriyur sub-division will face a planned power cut on February 12 from 10 am to 5 pm. The disruption is due to fourth quarterly maintenance work taken up by BESCOM at several power distribution centers. According to officials, maintenance will be carried out at the 66/11 KV stations in Haribabbe, P.D. Kote, Kalamarahalli, Mallappanahalli, and Aimangala. To ensure safety and smooth work, power supply on all 11 KV lines connected to these centers will be temporarily stopped. Many villages and areas, including Haribbe, Dharmapura, Shravanagere, Benakanahalli, Krishnapura, Sugur, Betur, Maddihalli, Hosakere, Tavandi, Hartikote, and nearby regions, will be affected. The Metikurke industrial area and surrounding villages will also experience outages. Peer Saab H., Assistant Executive Engineer of BESCOM Hiriyur, requested residents and business owners to cooperate during the maintenance hours and plan their activities accordingly to avoid inconvenience.

Project launched to fill 16 lakes and Gayatri Reservoir

Sudhakar said project will aid 100 villages facing low rainfall, dried lakes

CHITRADURGA

The Karnataka government has approved a project to fill 16 lakes and the Gayatri Reservoir in Javangondanahalli hobli, Hiriyur taluk, to address severe drinking water shortages and groundwater depletion in the area. A total of 0.307 TMC of water has been allocated for this initiative, officials confirmed.

District In-charge Minister D. Sudhakar said the project aims to benefit 100 villages under six Gram Panchayats, including Uduvalli, Gowdanahalli, Gandhinagar Chikkakere, Bagganadu, Vaddanahalli, Mavinamadu, Dindavara, Malgondanahalli, Veeravvanagathihalli, Pilali, Javangondanahalli, Katanayakanahalli, Arshinagundi, Ulivinahal, Yelladakere, and the Gayatri Reservoir. The region has long suffered from low rainfall, dried lakes, and declining groundwater, causing hardship for farmers and residents.

Deputy Chief Minister and Water Resources Minister D.K. Shivakumar had earlier directed that drinking water should be the top priority and that a committee under Technical Advisor Jayaprakash should identify water sources for the project.

Following months of meetings, the Minor Irrigation Department finalized the allocation, and a government order was issued on February 2, 2026.

Minister Sudhakar met Minor Irrigation and Groundwater Development Minister N.S. Bhosraj in Bengaluru, highlighting the urgent need to restore groundwater and ensure drinking water for residents before the summer. In response, Minister Bhosraj has instructed officials to prepare and submit a detailed project report (DPR) promptly for approval and implementation within the current financial year.

MLA lays stones, dedicates village development works

In Pichaguntarapalya, Balakrishna inaugurated Skill Development and Asset Resource centers built at Rs. 50 lakh, aiming to train local youth and promote skill-building initiatives

RAMANAGAR

MLA H.C. Balakrishna, also President of KRDCL, performed the foundation stone laying for several development projects and inaugurated new public buildings in villages under Manchanaikanahalli Gramaman limits of Bidadi Hobli.

In Hejjala village, the MLA performed a puja to mark the start of the Ayushman Arogya Mandir construction. The Health Department plans to build the hospital at a cost of Rs. 65 lakh, aimed at providing better healthcare services to the local residents.

In Pichaguntarapalya, Balakrishna dedicated the new building of the Skill Development Center and the Asset Resource Center, constructed under Gramaman Class-1 grants at a cost of Rs. 50 lakh. These centers are expected to provide training and support to local youth and promote skill-building initiatives in the area.

In Mandebayalu village of Shyanumangala, the MLA inaugurated the newly built Bhajan Mandir under Gram Panchayat Class-1. During the visit, villagers requested the issuance of title deeds to some residents, resolution of e-account issues, and the construction of a new CC drain. MLA Balakrishna assured them that title deeds would be provided soon and other development works would be undertaken promptly.

Several leaders and officials attended the events, including GBDA President Ganakal Nata Raju, KPCC member Byatappa, District Congress Vice President L. Chandrashekhar, former Gram Panchayat President Bettaswamy, Municipality Member C. Umesh, Gram Panchayat President Pavithra Basavaraju, and others. Officials such as PDO Chandrashekhar and MLA's personal assistant Abhishek were also present.

The visits highlighted the focus on healthcare, skill development, and civic infrastructure in the villages, reflecting the government's commitment to improving the quality of life for local communities.

MP sought expanded passport services, citing rising demand in fast-growing Mysuru for education, jobs and travel abroad

Yaduveer seeks full-fledged passport office in Mysuru

MYSURU

With passport applications steadily increasing from Mysuru and Kodagu districts, Mysuru MP Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar has urged the Union Ministry of External Affairs to establish a full-fledged Passport Seva Kendra (PSK) in Mysuru. He said the existing Post Office Passport Seva Kendra (POPSK) is working with limited capacity and does not provide Tatkal passport services.

The MP raised the issue during his visit to New Delhi, where he submitted a memorandum to the External Affairs Minister through officials. In the memorandum, he highlighted the growing demand for passport services in the region due to increased travel for education, employment, tourism and overseas job opportunities. Mysuru, being one of the fast-growing cities in Karnataka, is seeing a sharp rise in residents seeking passports.

Mr. Wadiyar pointed out that many applicants with urgent travel needs are forced to travel to Bengaluru as Tatkal services are not available in Mysuru. This causes inconvenience, additional expenses and delays, especially for students and job seekers.

As part of his proposal, the MP requested that the existing POPSK be shifted to the passport office premises at Ittigegud, located in the heart of the city, and upgraded into a complete PSK. He said this would improve service delivery and reduce pressure on passport offices in Bengaluru.

In addition, Mr. Wadiyar appealed to the Ministry to organise a mega passport camp in Kodagu district. He noted that people from Kodagu currently have to travel long distances even for basic passport-related work.

According to the MP, officials from the Ministry responded positively to the requests and assured that the proposals would be examined. He expressed hope that timely action would be taken to meet the growing public demand.

Farmers invited to set up harvester hubs

CHITRADURGA

The Agriculture Department has invited applications from farmers to establish Hi-Tech Harvester Hubs for the year 2025-26. The move aims to strengthen existing 'Yantradhare' centers, promote farm mechanization, and provide modern machines to farmers on a rental basis. Individual farmers, registered associations, and Farmer Producer Companies are eligible to apply. Individual beneficiaries can also set up two additional units under the general category within the district. Officials said the initiative will help farmers access advanced harvesting equipment without heavy investment. After completing harvest on their own fields, beneficiaries can rent out the machines to other farmers and earn additional income. The government will provide financial support through a Credit Linked Back-Ended Subsidy, offering a maximum subsidy amount under the scheme. Farmers who avail loans under the Agricultural Infrastructure Fund Scheme can also receive a three percent interest subsidy.

Interested applicants must submit their forms with required documents to the Assistant Director of Agriculture office in their respective taluk before February 25.

Admissions extended for Morarji Desai schools

CHITRADURGA

Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam Morarji Desai Residential Schools have extended the admission deadline for Class 6 for the 2026-27 session to February 28. Applications can be submitted online through the Seva Sindhu portal. Eligible students from Muslim, Christian, Jain, Buddhist, Sikh, Parsi communities, and Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other backward classes are encouraged to apply. For guidance, applicants can contact nearby residential schools, district, or taluk information centers. More details are available on the Seva Sindhu website at https://sevasindhuservices.karnataka.gov.in, said G. Rekha, District Officer of the Minority Welfare Department.

Community support key to saving mothers

CHITRADURGA

Community support plays a major role in reducing maternal and infant deaths and in building a healthy society, said Dr. Suman Rao, Head of St. John's Medical College and Hospital. She spoke after inaugurating a one-day workshop on maternal and child health.

The workshop was organized by the District Health and Family Welfare Department, St. John's Medical College and Hospital, and the Karnataka Health Promotion Trust at the Beturu Palya Primary Health Center. ASHA workers, Anganwadi staff, and other health workers took part in the training program.

Dr. Rao said that ASHA and Anganwadi workers must work together closely at the community level to lower risks faced by mothers and newborns. She stressed the need to prevent anemia in pregnant women and to promote birth preparedness. She also highlighted the importance of respecting the wishes of pregnant women, ensuring proper newborn care, encouraging breastfeeding, and providing nutritious food. Special focus was given to creating awareness about kangaroo mother care for low birth weight babies at home.

Several officials and community leaders attended the event, including Medical Officer Divya, Gram Panchayat President Manjula Jogish, and other health department representatives.

Drinking water supply must never be compromised

CHIKKABALLAPURA

Deputy Commissioner and District Magistrate G. Prabhu has directed officials to ensure that drinking water supply is not affected in any part of Chikkaballapura district. He was speaking while presiding over a meeting of the District Disaster Management Authority held at the District Magistrate's office hall on Wednesday.

He instructed that all government benefits meant for farmers, including crop damage compensation and crop insurance claims, must reach them without any delay. He said officials should act responsibly and ensure that no eligible farmer is left out.

The Deputy Commissioner said drinking water supply in both rural and urban areas should be given top priority. If water shortage is reported in any village or ward, immediate tanker supply should be arranged. Later, permanent arrangements should be made by coordinating with private borewell owners.

He said the district received normal rainfall of 735 mm last year. Though overall rainfall was slightly higher, uneven distribution across taluks could lead to water shortages during summer. Officials were asked to collect details of vulnerable villages and wards and take advance precautionary steps.

At present, drinking water problems exist in 13 villages and 24 wards. Water is being supplied with the help of private borewells. He said there has been no difficulty in supplying water through tankers so far.

Horata Samiti backs Bhadra Project Padayatra

CHITRADURGA

The Chitradurga District Irrigation Horata Samiti has announced full support for the padayatra launched by the State Farmers' Association, demanding early completion of the Upper Bhadra River Project and immediate release of ₹5,300 crore sanctioned for it.

Addressing the media, Samiti President P. Kodandaramaiah said the Irrigation Horata Samiti has been fighting for the project since 1996. Over the years, the committee has organised meetings, protests, conferences, road blockades, petitions, dharnas, and satyagrahas to highlight the irrigation needs of the district. He recalled that farmers' unions have always stood at the forefront of these struggles for the welfare of the region.

He said it was encouraging that farmers from all taluks are now walking to the district headquarters and planning an open conference at Onake Obavva Circle to pressurise the government. Supporting this movement, he said, is the duty of the Horata Samiti. He added that the committee will continue to put pressure on both the state and central governments along with farmers, workers, and pro-Kannada organisations.

Kodandaramaiah expressed disappointment that the project, which began with a bhoomi puja in 2009, is still incomplete. He recalled that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other leaders had promised national status for the project. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced ₹5,300 crore in the 2023 Union Budget, and BJP leaders repeated this promise during the Lok Sabha elections. However, the funds have still not been released.

He warned that denying funds on false grounds has become anti-people and urged citizens to remain alert so that the state government does not escape responsibility by blaming the Centre. He appealed to people of all parties to join the padayatra starting from five taluks on Thursday and reaching Chitradurga on Friday. General Convener Dr. Banjagere Jayaprakash, conveners and several leaders were present.

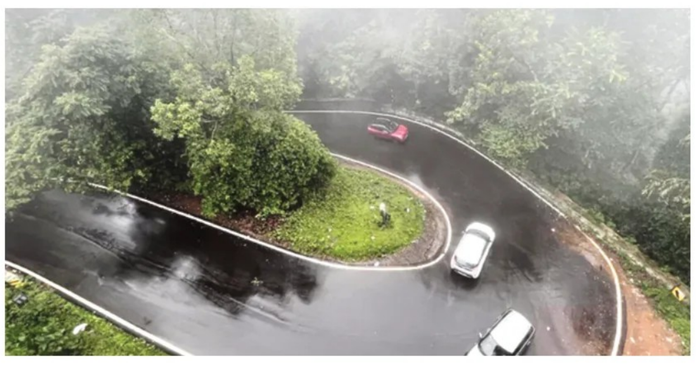
MALNAD COASTAL CONNECTIVITY

MoRTH plans highway upgrade, environmentalists raise concern

SHIVAMOGGA

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has invited bids for a feasibility study to widen the two-lane Agumbe Ghat stretch of National Highway 169A in Karnataka. The project includes preparing a detailed project report (DPR), which will assess the possibility of constructing a tunnel along the ghat, said Shivamogga MP B.Y. Raghavendra.

The DPR will be prepared at a cost of ₹2.33 crore. Raghavendra highlighted that the stretch has long posed challenges for commuters, and upgrading it would improve connectivity between the Malnad and coastal regions, boost transportation efficiency, and support tourism. He also thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Minister Nitin Gadkari for supporting the initiative.



However, environmentalists have raised strong objections to the proposed tunnel. Nagaraj Koove, a Chikkamagaluru-based environmentalist, said that Agumbe Ghat falls within the Someshwara Wildlife Sanctuary and passes through dense forest. The area is home to species like the king cobra and lion-tailed macaque, and its streams feed many rivers downstream. He warned that widening the road or constructing a tunnel could harm wildlife, forests, and local farmers.

L.K. Sripathi, a retired engineering professor and environmental activist, also expressed opposition to the tunnel plan, citing potential ecological damage and long-term risks to flora and fauna.

While the project aims to provide a permanent solution for travellers and improve infrastructure, the environmental concerns underline the need for careful planning to balance development with conservation in this biodiversity-rich region.

QUICK READ

Kalaburagi police solve two major burglaries

Kalaburagi

Kalaburagi city police have cracked two burglary cases and arrested two men, recovering valuables worth ₹16.22 lakh. Police Commissioner S.D. Sharanappa said the first case involved a house break-in on October 26, 2025, where 170 grams of gold, silver ornaments, and ₹50,000 were stolen. Acting on a tip-off, police arrested welder Rahul Singh Taak and recovered gold worth ₹6.22 lakh and ₹2 lakh in cash. In the second case, watchman Basavaraj Biradar was arrested for stealing 40 grams of gold and ₹1.6 lakh from his employer's house. He reportedly committed the theft to clear debts.

Farmers demand 12-hour power supply in Raichur

Raichur

Members of the Karnataka State Farmers' Association and Green Sene staged a protest outside the GESCOM office in Raichur, demanding a continuous 12-hour electricity supply for agriculture. They urged officials to provide transformers within 48 hours of application and take strict action against delays. Farmers said electric poles placed in the middle of fields are affecting farming and requested a proper survey to shift them to the sides. They also raised concerns over RR numbers and meter issues, seeking quick resolution. A memorandum was submitted to the Assistant Executive Engineer during the protest attended by several district leaders.

Christian community submits petition for development

Petitioners sought infrastructure, cemetery development, housing aid, livestock transport support, and benefits under Ganga Kalyan Yojana

HUNSUR

The Christian community in Hunsur has submitted a petition to Karnataka's Minorities and Wakf Board Minister, B.Z. Zameer Ahmed Khan, seeking implementation of various development projects and basic infrastructure, said Kudlur M. George, Chairman of the Minorities Christian Interest Protection Committee.

The petition, submitted during a meeting chaired by Prof. Joe Pat, Chairman of the State Christian Development Corporation, highlighted the community's demands. Leaders requested government support for infrastructure in Christian colonies, development of cemeteries, housing for poor families, and financial aid for transportation of livestock and vehicles. They also sought benefits under the Ganga Kalyan Yojana.

Minister Zameer Ahmed Khan accepted the petition and assured that he had discussed a funding request of ₹700 crore with the Chief Minister. He said he would push for the funds to be reserved to meet the community's needs.

The meeting was attended by community leaders, pastors, committee members, and government representatives. Minister Rahim Khan, George Joseph Hunt, President of Taluk Nohen Cooperative Society, members Geeta, former president Balavendran, secretary Deva, and others, including Donald Prakash, Rajappa John Kishore, and Priyanka, were present.

The community expressed hope that the government's support will bring much-needed development and improve living conditions for Christian families in Hunsur and surrounding areas.

CEO warns principals to improve PU results

Dr Badole, addressing PU college principals at Zilla Panchayat Hall, stressed the crucial PU stage and expressed concern over district's declining results compared to others

BIDAR

Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officer Dr Girish Badole Khadak has stressed that collective responsibility and strict monitoring are needed to improve Second Pre-University (PU) examination results in Bidar district. He issued a clear warning that disciplinary action will be taken against college principals if results continue to remain poor.

Dr Badole was speaking while presiding over a meeting of principals from government, aided, and unaided PU colleges held at the Zilla Panchayat Hall on Monday. He said the PU stage plays a crucial role in shaping a student's future, and declining results in the district are a serious concern when compared to other districts.

He instructed principals and lecturers to adopt innovative teaching methods and identify students who are weak in studies. Such students should be personally guided by subject lecturers through special attention and mentoring. He also directed colleges to complete the syllabus within the fixed time frame and create a learning environment free from exam-related fear.

Dr Badole emphasised the importance of conducting parents' meetings to keep families informed about student progress and attendance. He said there should be no negligence in duty at any level. He also called for a special drive to increase enrolment in government PU colleges across the district.

Deputy Director of the Pre-Degree Education Department Chandrakant Shahabadkar gave an introductory address at the meeting. Several principals from government, aided, and unaided PU colleges attended the discussion.

Dr Badole pointed out that every year, unaided colleges perform better than government and aided colleges. To bridge this gap, he suggested conducting additional classes and clearly explaining changes in question paper patterns to students. He announced that colleges showing improved results will be honoured by the district administration and Zilla Panchayat.

He warned that strict action will be taken against institutions that fail to improve performance, making accountability a key focus of the initiative.

Contractors Plan Statewide Strike on March 5

MANDYA

The Karnataka State Contractors Association has announced a statewide strike on March 5, demanding the release of pending payments from the state government, said the association's state president, R. Manjunath. The protest will be held at Freedom Park in Bengaluru, with participation expected from over 25,000 contractors.

Speaking at a meeting organized by the Mandya District Contractors Association at the PWD office, Manjunath said that contractors across all districts will hold meetings until February 25 to raise awareness about their grievances. He demanded that pending bills be released immediately, or at least in stages, as the delay has caused severe financial distress for contractors.

Manjunath criticized the current Congress government for retaining Rs 37,000 crore in outstanding payments over the last three years, much higher than under the previous BJP government. He said middlemen in various departments have worsened the situation, leaving contractors unable to repay loans or interest. The departments affected include Public Works, Water Resources, Minor Irrigation, Rural Development, Urban Development, Mines, and Panchayat Raj.

He highlighted that Rs 950 crore in pending bills are owed to contractors in Mandya district alone. Class 2, 3, and 4 contractors face additional challenges, including GST notices, cancellation of tenders, and issues with Material Dumping Plants.

Ban sought on ritual waste in rivers

MANDYA

Deputy Commissioner Dr. Kumar has directed officials to take strict steps to protect the sanctity of rivers and ensure environmental safety by completely banning the unscientific immersion of ashes, clothes, and puja items in the Cauvery river. He said protecting the river is a shared responsibility and religious practices must be carried out in a clean and scientific manner.

Speaking at a progress review meeting of the Urban Development Department held at the District Collector's office, Dr. Kumar expressed concern over rising pollution caused by improper rituals. He said throwing ashes, clothes, flowers, and other worship materials directly into the river is harming water quality and the surrounding ecosystem.

The Deputy Commissioner instructed the Chief Officer of Srirangapatna to take strict action to prevent such practices. He said fixed charges should be introduced for priests to conduct ash immersion rituals in an organised and scientific way at designated locations such as Paschimavahini, Snanaghatta, Gosai Ghat, and Sangama. He also directed officials to install CCTV cameras at these places to monitor activities and prevent violations.

Dr. Kumar said the Environmental Pollution Control Officer must regularly visit riverbanks and ensure that steps are taken to stop pollution of the riverbed. He stressed that cleanliness and hygiene must be maintained at all ritual points.

He further instructed the Chief Officer of Srirangapatna Taluk to hold a meeting with priests and clearly explain the need to follow scientific and eco-friendly methods while performing religious rituals. Separate guidelines should be prepared focusing on river sanctity and environmental protection, he added. The Deputy Commissioner said these measures are necessary to balance faith with responsibility and to protect the Cauvery for future generations.

District Urban Development Cell Planning Officer Narasimha Murthy, Executive Engineer Pratap, and other officials were present at the meeting.

Raichur MP warns about rising cotton imports

KALABURAGI

Raichur MP G. Kumar Naik has raised concerns over the sharp rise in cotton imports into India and the decline in domestic production. Speaking in Lok Sabha, he urged the Union Government to adopt a stable, farmer-friendly cotton policy to protect growers in Karnataka and across the country. According to Ministry of Textiles data, cotton imports increased by 39% between 2020-21 and 2024-25, while domestic production fell from 370 lakh bales in 2017-18 to 297.24 lakh bales in 2024-25. Naik warned that falling production and productivity pointed to structural stress in the sector, and inconsistent policies were hurting domestic farmers.

He said cotton prices crashed in 2025 after the government removed import duty during a period of global tariff pressure. Imports from the United States surged over 200% and from Brazil by more than 1,000% between 2023-24 and 2024-25. Naik cautioned that continued dependence on imports could weaken domestic producers and threaten India's long-term agricultural security. Highlighting Karnataka's performance, he said the State recorded the highest cotton yield in the southern zone, with Raichur, Kalaburagi, and Yadgir showing potential for expansion if supported with sustained investment and institutional aid. He also noted that the Cotton Mission for Farmers, allocated ₹500 crore in the 2025-26 budget, did not appear in current allocations, suggesting limited field-level implementation.

Hunsur taluk leaders raise local issues to CM

HUNSUR

A program was held at the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Community Hall in Hunsur, celebrating social justice pioneer D. Devaraj Urs. Former MLA Snehajeevi H.P. Manjunath inaugurated the event by lighting a ceremonial lamp and addressed the gathering.

During the program, Nataraja Swamis of Gowdagere Math and DSS Convener Hariharananda Swami Ningaraja Malladi submitted a petition to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, requesting the government to address several important issues of Hunsur taluk in the upcoming budget. The Chief Minister received the petition and assured full support. He stated that under his government, development works and local problems would be prioritized, and solutions would be provided promptly. Other notable attendees included Raghu, Chairman of the Guarantee Scheme, Raksha Samiti member Santosh, Taluk Kuruba Samaj Chairman Kunnegowda, Advocate Puttaraju Hosur Kumar, HY Mahadev, Khalid Mallesh Murugesh, and several community leaders who witnessed the discussion and pledged cooperation.

MLA provides aid to family after electrical accident

BIDAR

Bidar South MLA Dr. Shailendra Beldale provided personal financial assistance to a family affected by an electrical accident in Ghodapalli village. The incident caused significant damage to the home of Ambavva, and the MLA acted promptly after receiving information about the mishap.

Dr. Beldale assured the family that the government would take necessary steps to provide additional relief at the earliest. He personally handed over financial support to help the family recover from the sudden loss.

The assistance program was attended by several local leaders, including Basavaraja Pawar, Nagabhushan Kamthane, Shivakumar Swamy, Udaya Toran, Ashok Patil, Basavaraja Hilalpur, Ravi Balebai, Srinivas Hugara, Rajasekhara, Shivakumar Sultanapura, Sainath Patila, Vishal Ativala, Aditya Reddy, Praveena Patila, Tukaram, and many others. Their presence highlighted the community's support for the affected family. The MLA's media coordinator, Nagesh Sidda, confirmed that this initiative is part of Dr. Beldale's ongoing efforts to assist residents in emergencies and ensure timely government intervention.

Local residents appreciated the swift response, noting that such support not only provides immediate relief but also strengthens trust between the government and the people. The family expressed gratitude for the prompt help, which will allow them to repair their home and begin rebuilding their lives.

NAME CHANGE

I, **DAWOOD NAWAB**, Residing at No. 21/6, 1st A Cross, 6th Main, Bismillah Nagar, Bengaluru-560029, have changed my name to **SYED DAWOOD**, Vide Affidavit Dated: 11.02.2026 before notary PRAKASHA. C Bengaluru.

NAME CHANGE

I, **MOHAMMED HANEEF SHAIKMADAR**, resident of No.6, NKF Layout, Bellahalli Village, Yelahanka Main Road, Yelahanka, Bengaluru-560 064, have changed my name to **MOHAMMED HANEEF**, vide affidavit dated: 11.02.2026, before Notary V.RAJASHEKHAR, Bangalore.

ಪ್ರಮಾಣ ಪತ್ರ

ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು-560004, ಬಸವನಗುಡಿ, ಪೊಲೀಸ್ ಸ್ಟೇಷನ್ ರಸ್ತೆ, 1ನೇ ಫ್ಲೋರ್, ಫ್ಲಾಟ್ ನಂ.24ರಲ್ಲಿ ವಾಸವಾಗಿರುವ ಜೆ.ಬನ್ಸಿಲಾಲ್ ರವರ ಮಗನಾದ ಸುಮಾರು 68 ವರ್ಷ ವಯಸ್ಸಿನ ಶ್ರೀ.ಗೌತಮ್ ಚಂದ್ (ಆಧಾರ್ ನಂ.2288 7373 3413) ಆದ ನಾನು ಪ್ರಮಾಣ ಮಾಡಿ ಹೇಳುವುದೇನೆಂದರೆ: ನಾನು ಮೇಲ್ಕಂಡ ವಿಳಾಸದಲ್ಲಿ ವಾಸವಾಗಿದ್ದು ಈ ಮೂಲಕ ತಿಳಿಯಪಡಿಸುವುದೇನೆಂದರೆ ಈ ಮೂಲಕ ಸಾರ್ವಜನಿಕರಿಗೆ ತಿಳಿಯಪಡಿಸುವುದೇನೆಂದರೆ ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಗ್ರಾಮಾಂತರ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆ, ದೊಡ್ಡಬಳ್ಳಾಪುರ ತಾಲ್ಲೂಕು, ಮಧುರೆ ಹೋಬಳಿ, ಚಿಕ್ಕದೇವಿ ಅಗ್ರಹಾರ ಗ್ರಾಮದ ಸರ್ವೆ ನಂ.114/5ರಲ್ಲಿ 1-29.04 ಗುಂಟೆ, ಮತ್ತು ಡಿಟೋಗ್ರಾಮದ ಸರ್ವೆ ನಂ.114/6ರಲ್ಲಿ 05.4 ಗುಂಟೆ, ಸರ್ವೆ ನಂ.114/7ರಲ್ಲಿ 05.4 ಗುಂಟೆ ಒಟ್ಟು ಕೃಷಿ ಜಮೀನಿದ್ದು ನಾನು ಶುದ್ಧ ಕ್ರಯಕ್ಕೆ ಪಡೆಯಲು ಇಚ್ಛಿಸಿದ್ದು, ಇದಕ್ಕೆ ಸಂಬಂಧಿಸಿದ ಯಾರಾದರೂ ವಾರಸುದಾರರು ಇದ್ದಲ್ಲಿ ಮತ್ತು ತಂಟೆ ತಕರಾರು ಇದ್ದಲ್ಲಿ ಇವತ್ತಿನಿಂದ 7 ದಿನಗಳ ಒಳಗಾಗಿ ಈ ಕೆಳಕಂಡ ಮೊಬೈಲ್ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆಗೆ ಸಂಪರ್ಕಿಸತಕ್ಕದ್ದು, ತದ ನಂತರ ಬಂದ ತಕರಾರುಗಳಿಗೆ ನಾನು ಜವಾಬ್ದಾರನಲ್ಲ ಎಂದು ಈ ಮೂಲಕ ತಿಳಿಸಲು ಇಚ್ಛಿಸಿರುತ್ತೇನೆ.

ಮೊಬೈಲ್ 9480455826

ಎಸ್.ಚಂದ್ರಶೇಖರ್, ವಕೀಲರು ಹಾಗೂ ನೋಟರಿ, ದೊಡ್ಡಬಳ್ಳಾಪುರ

ದಿನಾಂಕ: 11.02.2026, ಸ್ಥಳ : ದೊಡ್ಡಬಳ್ಳಾಪುರ

CHANGE OF NAME

I, VITHAL RAO S/o PRALHAD RAO KULKARNI, R/o H No 1-114, Near Grama Panchyatha Office Road, Bhankur, Shahabad(Rural), Chitapur Gulbarga, Karnataka585228, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as VITHAL RAO KULKARNI.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, SHANKUTLA W/o VITHAL RAO KULKARNI, R/o H No 1-114, Near Grama Panchyatha Office Road, Bhankur, Shahabad(Rural), Chitapur Gulbarga, Karnataka585228, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as SHAKUNTALA KULKARNI.

ALTUM CREDO HOME FINANCE PRIVATE LTD
Regd. Office: Floor No. 7, Kalpataru Infinia, Wakdewadi, Shivajinagar, Pune - 411005. Maharashtra (India)

APPENDIX IV **POSSESSION NOTICE** (FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTY)

The undersigned being the authorized officer of Altum Credo Home Finance Pvt. Ltd., (ACHFL), Under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 ("SARFAESI Act, 2002") and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 ("Enforcement Rules"). Demand Notice(s) issued by the Authorized Officer of the company to the Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) (collectively referred to as the "Borrowers") mention herein below to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to Borrowers and the public in general that the under signed has taken symbolic / physical possession of the property described herein below in supersize of powers conferred upon him under Sub-section(4)of Section 13 of the said act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest Enforcement rules, 2002. The borrower's attention is invited to prevision of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in receipt of time available, to redeem the secured assets. The borrowers in particular and the public in general are hereby caution not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ACHFL for an amount mention herein under with the interest thereon.

Name of Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) Loan A/c No.
1. Thippesha R (Borrower) **2. Ratnamma** (Co-Borrower) **Lan No: 1192020100190**

Description of Secured Asset
All that piece and parcel of property bearing No. 6/P1P, E-Swathu No. 151200100500120258, measuring 6.096 x 5.9741 meters, i.e. 34.42 Sq. Mtrs., situated at Kathalgere Village, Kathalgere Gram Panchayath, Channagiri Taluk, and **Bounded on: East:** Road, **West:** Property of Kotramma, **South:** House of K. T. Ramesh, **North:** Grampanchayath Road.

Date of Demand Notice and Amount
18.09.2025 / Rs. 3,85,219/- (Rupees Three Lakh Eighty Five Thousand Two Hundred Nineteen Only)

NPA Date - 29.08.2025 | **Date of Possession : 06.02.2026**

STATUTORY NOTICE TO BORROWERS/ CO-BORROWERS AND GUARANTORS Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) are hereby put to caution that the property may be sold at any time hereinafter by way of public auction/tenders and as such this may also be treated as a notice under Rule 6,8 & 9 of Security (interest) Enforcement Rules,2002.

Sd/-
Place : Channagiri, Karnataka **Authorized Officer**
Date : 10.02.2026 **Altum Credo Home Finance Pvt. Ltd. (ACHFL)**

ALTUM CREDO HOME FINANCE PRIVATE LTD
Regd. Office: Floor No. 7, Kalpataru Infinia, Wakdewadi, Shivajinagar, Pune - 411005. Maharashtra (India)

APPENDIX IV **POSSESSION NOTICE** (FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTY)

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Name of Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) Loan A/c No.
1. Murali S N (Borrower) **2. Pushpa** (Co-Borrower) **Lan No: 1472020100033**

Description of Secured Asset
All that piece and parcel of Immovable Property bearing Property No. 17/21, Pramana Patra No. 9901094, E-Swathu No. 151901102301020020, situated at Shettihalli Village, within the limits of Nambihalli Grama Panchayath, Srinivasapura Taluk, Kolar District, measuring East to West 6.7056 Meters and North to South 15.24 Meters, in all admeasuring 102.19 Square Meters, consisting of Ground and First Floor with Granite Flooring, together with all easementary and appurtenant rights, within the limits and under the jurisdiction of the competent authority, which is **Bounded as under: East:** Road, **West:** Chowdappa's Property, **South:** V. Narayana Swamy's own Property, **North:** V. Narayana Swamy's own Property.

Date of Demand Notice and Amount
10.10.2025 / Rs. 15,31,612/- (Rupees Fifteen Lakh Thirty One Thousand Six Hundred Twelve Only)

NPA Date - 28.09.2025 | **Date of Possession : 05.02.2026**

Name of Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) Loan A/c No.
1. Murali S N (Borrower) **2. Pushpa** (Co-Borrower) **Lan No: S161209000001**

Description of Secured Asset
All that piece and parcel of Immovable Property bearing Property No. 17/21, Pramana Patra No. 9901094, E-Swathu No. 151901102301020020, situated at Shettihalli Village, within the limits of Nambihalli Grama Panchayath, Srinivasapura Taluk, Kolar District, measuring East to West 6.7056 Meters and North to South 15.24 Meters, in all admeasuring 102.19 Square Meters, consisting of Ground and First Floor with Granite Flooring, together with all easementary and appurtenant rights, within the limits and under the jurisdiction of the competent authority, which is **Bounded as under: East:** Road, **West:** Chowdappa's Property, **South:** V. Narayana Swamy's own Property, **North:** V. Narayana Swamy's own Property.

Date of Demand Notice and Amount
10.10.2025 / Rs. 4,33,718/- (Rupees Four Lakh Thirty Three Thousand Seven Hundred Eighteen Only)

NPA Date - 28.09.2025 | **Date of Possession : 05.02.2026**

STATUTORY NOTICE TO BORROWERS/ CO-BORROWERS AND GUARANTORS Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) are hereby put to caution that the property may be sold at any time hereinafter by way of public auction/tenders and as such this may also be treated as a notice under Rule 6,8 & 9 of Security (interest) Enforcement Rules,2002.

Sd/-
Place : Kolar, Karnataka **Authorized Officer**
Date : 10.02.2026 **Altum Credo Home Finance Pvt. Ltd. (ACHFL)**

CH CLASSIFIEDS To place a classified ad contact: 080-41209042

India's people-centric BRICS leadership applauded

The first meeting of BRICS Sherpas and Sous Sherpas under India's 2026 Chairship was successfully held from February 9–10

NEW DELHI

The meeting was chaired by Sudhakar Dalela, India's BRICS Sherpa, with support from Shambhu L Hakki, the BRICS Sous Sherpa. Senior officials and Sherpas from Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and the UAE attended. On February 10, they jointly met External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar.

India outlined its Chairship priorities under the theme "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability."

Various Ministries shared proposals across health, agriculture, labour, disaster management, climate, energy, ICT, security, and finance. Presentations also focused on people-centric initiatives like sports, youth programs, cultural engagements, BRICS Academic Forum, Think Tank Council, Civil Forum, Business Council, and Women's Business Alliance.

The international delegates appreciated India's theme and priorities, noting they build on previous BRICS efforts.

They exchanged views on strengthening institutional development and advancing shared goals of innovation, cooperation, resilience, and sustainability. The meeting also included cultural visits to the National Crafts Museum, Hastakala Academy, and Akshardham Temple. BRICS Sherpas and Sous Sherpas will continue meeting regularly throughout the year to coordinate work across thematic areas.

The event reflects India's emphasis on inclusive, people-focused international cooperation, aiming to foster stronger ties among BRICS members and partner countries while promoting sustainable development and innovation.

Modi expressed grief and solidarity with Canada following a tragic mass shooting in Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia

Canada mass shooting: PM Modi offers condolences

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday extended his heartfelt condolences to Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney after a mass shooting in Tumbler Ridge left nine people dead, including the suspect. Posting on X, Modi stated, "Deeply shocked by the horrendous shooting in Canada. I extend my heartfelt condolences to the families who have lost their loved ones and wish a speedy recovery to the injured. India stands in solidarity with the people of Canada in this moment of profound grief."

According to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the suspect, who caused the deaths of nine individuals, was found dead from what appears to be a self-inflicted injury. The attack occurred on Tuesday afternoon at Tumbler Ridge Secondary School, where six victims were found dead inside. One more died while being transported to the hospital.

Authorities also discovered a second site linked to the incident, where two additional victims were found dead. Two critically injured victims were airlifted for treatment, and 25 others received medical attention for injuries not considered life-threatening.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney described the attack as "horrific" and expressed deep devastation. In a post on X, he said, "I am devastated by today's horrific shootings in Tumbler Ridge, B.C. My prayers and deepest condolences are with the families and friends who have lost loved ones to these horrific acts of violence."

The incident marks one of the most tragic recent events in Canada, drawing condolences and expressions of solidarity from world leaders, including Prime Minister Modi, highlighting global support for the victims and their families during this difficult time.

Oman positions itself as gateway for India

NEW DELHI

Yahya Al Dughaishi, Counsellor at the Embassy of Oman, highlighted that the country is strategically positioned as a gateway for India due to its geographic location, world-class ports, and connectivity to Africa, Europe, and the Middle East, he said Oman's investor-friendly regulations provide a strong platform for Indian businesses, particularly in sectors like metal and green steel manufacturing, which are seeing growing global demand.

India-Oman relations have deep historical roots, dating back nearly 5,000 years through maritime trade. Diplomatic relations were formally established in 1955, and since 2008, the partnership has grown into a robust strategic engagement. Oman is a crucial pillar in India's West Asia policy, fostering regional stability, maritime security, and economic integration across the Indian Ocean. High-level exchanges have reinforced ties. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Oman in February 2018, while External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar visited in December 2019 and February 2025. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal co-chaired the 11th India-Oman Joint Commission Meeting in January 2025, emphasizing trade and investment cooperation.

TMC takes separate route from Cong on LS Speaker impeachment

NEW DELHI

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) has taken a distinct stance from the Congress on the issue of impeaching Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla. By suggesting a restrained and constructive approach before seeking impeachment, TMC signaled dissent, even as Congress holds the Leader of Opposition post.

Observers say this also critiques Congress, particularly Rahul Gandhi, for not supporting TMC's previous move against Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar.

TMC's position reflects its ambition to assert itself as a major Opposition force in Delhi. Experts note the party aims for recognition as West Bengal's leading political group, with Mamata Banerjee seen alongside prominent leaders like Sharad Pawar and Sonia Gandhi. With 28 MPs in the Lower House, TMC is smaller than Congress' 99 MPs and Samajwadi Party's 37, but it is determined not to follow Congress automatically.

Veteran journalist Gautam Hore said TMC's cautious approach considers both parliamentary strategy and the upcoming West Bengal Assembly election. The party intends to notify the Speaker and allow time for correction before pursuing impeachment. Analysts say the move asserts TMC's independence and avoids appearing subordinate to Congress in Delhi politics.

Earlier efforts by Congress to reconcile differences, such as replacing West Bengal state president Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury with Subhankar Sarkar, have not significantly influenced TMC. Congress' decision to break ties with the Left Front ahead of state polls was another attempt at political recalibration. Despite these overtures, TMC has maintained distance, choosing a solitary course that underscores its political strategy and ambition in national and state politics.

No evidence found to charge Kejriwal excise case

NEW DELHI

The Delhi Excise policy case saw the accused, including former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, conclude arguments on framing charges before the Rouse Avenue court on Wednesday. Senior advocate N. Hariharan, representing Kejriwal, argued that there is no incriminating evidence against him to justify charges. Special Judge Jitendra Singh heard the arguments and directed the counsel to submit written submissions. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), represented by ASG D.P. Singh, will present rebuttal arguments on February 12.

Hariharan contended that Kejriwal was performing official duties and there is no proof linking him to any alleged payments requested from the so-called "south lobby." He noted that Kejriwal's name appeared only in the fourth supplementary chargesheet, while earlier chargesheets did not name him. The counsel described the fourth chargesheet as a "cut-and-paste" repetition of previous allegations, aimed at implicating Kejriwal without solid evidence.

DMK-Cong express separate views on coalitions

NEW DELHI

With assembly elections in Tamil Nadu just months away, Congress MP Jothimani on Wednesday stated that alliance discussions will commence from February 22, emphasising that every party has its own stance on coalition governments. She acknowledged that the Congress and Chief Minister MK Stalin hold "distinct views" regarding power-sharing. Jothimani said, "Every party has its own view on coalition governments. DMK and Congress are separate parties with distinct views on coalitions. Congress has formed a committee for this. The CM has his own view." She added that the committee will guide alliance talks for the upcoming elections.

Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu Congress president K. Selvaperunthagai described the DMK-led INDIA alliance as "very strong" and expressed confidence that the DMK will secure consecutive victories.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
Office of the Executive Engineer, No.1 Buildings Division, S.J.P. Campus. Bengaluru. Phone: 080-22255210
No. EE/Bld.1/AE-3/2025-26/78 Date: 11.02.2026
INVITATION FOR TENDER (IFT)
The above Department invites Tenders through e-procurement portal of GoK**(http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in)** from eligible Tenderers for Renovation of Superintendent of Police and Police Inspector rooms on first floor (24+2) 26 rooms at 1st stage, M.S. Building, Bengaluru. (PWD/2025-26/BD/WORK_INDENT32736) Approx. value of work: **Rs. 2,82,11,518.35.** EMD: **Rs. 4,23,200/-** (**Rs. 1,00,000/-** through e-procurement. Balance Amount through BG). Period of Completion: **6 Months** (including rainy season). Cost of Document: As in e-portal. Reservation: Others. Last date for downloading Tender through e-procurement portal and submission through online: **18.02.2026 up to 5.00 PM.** Date of opening the Tender: as per e-procurement guidelines. Further information and other details can be obtained from the above office or from e-procurement portal **http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in**
Sd/- Executive Engineer.
DIPR/DD-C.P/5582/KSMCA/2025-26

Chikkamagaluru Urban Development Authority
Hiremagaluru Residential Layout, Phase I, Hiremagaluru Kadur Bypass Road, Kalyana Nagara, Chikkamagaluru – 577102
Tel: 08262-295712 Email: cmr_cudackm@yahoo.in Website: www.chikmagalur.uda.gov.in
No: CKMUDA/ Kenchanakatte Development: 2025-26 Date: 06.02.2026
E-Procurement Tender Notice
A re-tender is invited from eligible contractors registered with the Public Works Department in a two-cover system through e-procurement (https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in/), subject to conditions, for carrying out the following detailed work within the scope of the Chikkamagaluru Urban Development Authority.
Sl.No. 1. Work Details: Development work of Hiremagaluru Kenchanakatte Lake within the Chikkamagaluru Urban Development Authority Area. Indent No: CKMUDA/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT12 **Tender Amount / Estimated Amount:** Rs. 320.00 lakhs **E.M.D in (Rs.) :** As per e-Procurement Portal
*) Pre-Bid Meeting Date and Time: Date: 26.02.2026 up to 16:00 hrs *) Last Date and Time for Submission of Objections on e-Portal: 05.03.2026 up to 16:00 hrs *) Last Date and Time for Submission of Tender Forms on e-Procurement Portal: 10.03.2026 at 17:30 hrs *) Date and Time of Opening of Technical Bid: 12.03.2026 at 11.00 hrs *) Date and Time of Opening of Financial Bid: 16.03.2026 at 11.00 hrs
Further details are available during office hours and on the e-portal(https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in/). Amendments, if any, will be published on the e-portal only.
Sd/-Commissioner, Sd/-Chairmen
Chikmagaluru Urban Development Authority Chikmagaluru.
DIPR/ckm/No.159/25-26/ksmca/1817

Government of Karnataka
BENGALURU URBAN ZILLA PANCHAYAT
Executive Engineer, Rural Drinking Water & Sanitation Division, First Floor, Zilla Panchayat Building, S. Kariyappa Road, Banashankari (Near Banashankari Temple) Bengaluru-560070.
TENDER NOTIFICATION No.17/2025-26/ DATED 10.02.2026
Karnataka Public Procurement Portal Tender Notice (Short Term)
Tenders are invited through Karnataka Public procurement portal for the Goods approved Under WQMSP Head of grants for the year 2025-26 Under Two Cover System. The Tender Documents can be obtained and submitted on or before **19.02.2026** up to **4.00 PM**. For further details contact the above address during office hours or visit **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in.**
Sd/-
Executive Engineer,
Rural Drinking Water & Sanitation Division,
Bengaluru Urban Dist, Bengaluru
DIPR/CP/Shirdi Sai/5579/2025-26

Government of Karnataka
RURAL DRINKING WATER & SANITATION DEPARTMENT Office of Executive Engineer, Rural Water Supply & Sanitation Division Belagavi Near Krishna Devaraya Circle, 1" Floor of PRED Division, Nehru Nagar -590010
No.RDW&S/ BGM/PB-2/TND-22/ KW- 3/2025-26/2167 Dated:09/02/2026
ITEM RATE TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION (E-PROCUREMENT)
I) The Executive Engineer, RDW&S Division, Belgaum invites item rate tenders on behalf of Governor of Karnataka State Government from the eligible contractors II) Indent Number:9773/Call-2 Calendar events are as follows : i) Last date & time for receipt of tenders through e-portal: 20-02-2026 before17:00hours. ii) Date of Opening of Technical Bid : 21-02-2026 before17:30Hours iii)Date of Opening of Financial Bid:After Technical Bid approva IV)Amount put to Tender, EMD, work completion period, Class of contractor ,eligibility criteria are as published in e-procurement portal. (Including Rainy Season).
More details can be had from the office of the undersigned and also through website https://kppp.karnataka.gov.inby clicking list of Tenders which will link to all dept works list.
Sd/-Executive Engineer,
RDW&S Division, Belgaum
DIPR/BGM/RO-NO-1820/KSMCA/2025-26

BENGALURU NORTH CITY CORPORATION
Office of the Executive Engineer, Special Division, Amruthahalli Main Road, Byatarayanapura, Bengaluru-560092
No. BNCC/EE/SD/TEND/13/2025-26 Date : 11-02-2026
INVITATION FOR TENDER (IFT) SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION
(Through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal Only) (Two Cover System)
The Executive Engineer, Special Division, BNCC invites tender on behalf of the Commissioner, BNCC, Bengaluru from eligible registered agencies in any State Govt. Organization for providing services mentioned in the Table below.

Sl.	Name of the Projects
1	Implementing Animal Birth Control (ABC), Antirabies Vaccination (ARV & Combined) and Deworming for Stray Dogs in Zone-1 of BNCC (Call-2). **EMD :** Rs. 2.70 Lakhs. **Amount put to tender :** Rs. 180.00 Lakhs.
2	Implementing Animal Birth Control (ABC), Antirabies Vaccination (ARV & Combined) and Deworming for Stray Dogs in Zone-2 of BNCC (Call-2). **EMD :** Rs. 1.62 Lakhs. **Amount put to tender :** Rs. 108.00 Lakhs.

Calendar of Events : (1) Tender documents may be downloaded from Government of Karnataka Public Procurement Portal website **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** under login for Contractor. **(2)** Last date & time for Queries (only through online) : **19.02.2026 upto 4.00 PM. (3)** Date and time of pre-bid meeting : **19.02.2026 upto 3.00 PM. (4)** Last date & time for receipt of Tenders : **26.02.2026 upto 4.00 PM. (5)** Opening of Technical bid : On **27.02.2026 at 4.30 PM** if possible next working day. **(6)** Opening of Financial bid (if Possible) : On **01.03.2026 at 4.00 PM** if possible.
Sd/- Executive Engineer, Special Division, BNCC

CH CLASSIFIEDS
To place a classified ad contact: **080-41209042**

INVENT ASSETS SECURITISATION & RECONSTRUCTION PRIVATE LIMITED invent
Regd. Office : Bakhtawar, Suite 'B', Ground Floor, Backbay Reclamation Scheme, Block III, 229, Nariman Point, Mumbai - 400021.
DEMAND NOTICE
Under Section 13(2) of the Securitization And Reconstruction Of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002, read with Rule 3(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002. The undersigned is the authorized officer of **Invent Assets Securitisation & Reconstruction Private Limited ("Invent")** .Under Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 (The said Act). In exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(2) of the said Act read with Rule 3(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, the authorized officer has issued demand notices under 13(2) of the said Act, calling upon the borrower(s) [The "said borrower(s)"], to repay the amounts mentioned in the respective demand notice(s) issued to them that are also given below. In connection with above, notice is hereby given, once again, to the said borrower(s) to pay to **Invent Assets Securitisation & Reconstruction Private Limited ("Invent")** , within sixty days from the publication of this notice, the amounts indicated herein below, together with further interest as detailed in the said demand notice(s), from the date(s) mentioned below till the date of payment and/or realization, payable under the loan agreement read with other documents/writings, if any, executed by the said borrower(s). As Security for due repayment of the loan, the following assets have been mortgaged to **Invent Assets Securitisation & Reconstruction Private Limited ("Invent")** by the said borrower(s) respectively.

Name of the Borrower(s)/Co-Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) Loan Account Number
1. Hejjura (Applicant), **2. Hejjura** (Co-Applicant), **3. Roopa** (Co-Applicant) **Lan: 1182040100064**
Demand Notice Date and Amount With NPA Date
31.12.2025 / Rs. 8,24,839/- (Rupees Eight Lakhs Twenty Four Thousand Eight Hundred Thirty Nine Only) as on **30.12.2025 (NPA) on 29.12.2025**
Description Of Secured Assets (Immovable Property)
All that piece and parcel of the land and building in Property bearing No. 323/1, P.I.D. No. 152200102117500359, Situated at Hanchipura Grama, Hanchipura Gramapanchayat, Saragur Block, Mysore (D), Measuring: E-W: 8.534 Meter & N-S: 8.8392 Meter, within the jurisdiction of Registration of Senior Sub Registrar, Saragur, **East:** Government Road, **West:** House of Gopamma, **North:** House of Kalaiah, **South:** House of Ramaiah.

Sd/-
Place : Mysore, Karnataka **Authorized Officer**
Date : 12.02.2026 **Invent Assets Securitization and Reconstruction Pvt. Ltd.**

INVENT ASSETS SECURITISATION & RECONSTRUCTION PRIVATE LIMITED invent
Regd. Office : Bakhtawar, Suite 'B', Ground Floor, Backbay Reclamation Scheme, Block III, 229, Nariman Point, Mumbai - 400021.
DEMAND NOTICE
Under Section 13(2) of the Securitization And Reconstruction Of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002, read with Rule 3(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002. The undersigned is the authorized officer of **Invent Assets Securitisation & Reconstruction Private Limited ("Invent")** .Under Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 (The said Act). In exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(2) of the said Act read with Rule 3(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, the authorized officer has issued demand notices under 13(2) of the said Act, calling upon the borrower(s) [The "said borrower(s)"], to repay the amounts mentioned in the respective demand notice(s) issued to them that are also given below. In connection with above, notice is hereby given, once again, to the said borrower(s) to pay to **Invent Assets Securitisation & Reconstruction Private Limited ("Invent")** , within sixty days from the publication of this notice, the amounts indicated herein below, together with further interest as detailed in the said demand notice(s), from the date(s) mentioned below till the date of payment and/or realization, payable under the loan agreement read with other documents/writings, if any, executed by the said borrower(s). As Security for due repayment of the loan, the following assets have been mortgaged to **Invent Assets Securitisation & Reconstruction Private Limited ("Invent")** by the said borrower(s) respectively.

Name of the Borrower(s)/Co-Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) Loan Account Number
1. Kumar M K (Applicant), **2. Kumar M K** (Co-Applicant), **3. Lakshmidevi** (Co-Applicant) **Lan: 1172020100023**
Demand Notice Date and Amount With NPA Date
31.12.2025 / Rs. 13,35,990/- (Rupees Thirteen Lakhs Thirty Five Thousand Nine Hundred Ninety Only) as on **30.12.2025 (NPA) on 29.12.2025**
Description Of Secured Assets (Immovable Property)
Property bearing Northern portion of Property no. 123, Khatha No. 123/2/243 Situated at Machohalli village, Dasanapura Hobli, Bangalore North taluk, Measuring East to West 33 feet and North to South 15 feet in all measuring 495 Sqft. **East:** Remaining Portion of Same property in Site No. 123 belonging No 3rd party Sidde yellamma, **West:** Road, **North:** Private property, **South:** Remaining Portion of Same property in Site No. 123 belonging No 1st party Anjinappa.
Name of the Borrower(s)/Co-Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) Loan Account Number
1. Manjya Naik U (Applicant), **2. Manjya Naik U** (Co-Applicant), **3. Hema Bai** (Co-Applicant) **Lan: 1192020100205**
Demand Notice Date and Amount With NPA Date
31.12.2025 / Rs. 5,90,053/- (Rupees Five Lakhs Ninety Thousand Fifty Three Only) as on **30.12.2025 (NPA) on 29.12.2025**
Description Of Secured Assets (Immovable Property)
Property No. 248, E Swathu No. 151200403200220133, measuring 12.192 X 6.4008 Mts i.e 78.04 Sq Mts Situated at Toudur Village, Toudur Gram Panchayath, Harapanahalli, **East:** House of Kanya Naik, **West:** Kana of Rudri Bai, **North:** Road, **South:** House of Yanka Naik.
Name of the Borrower(s)/Co-Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) Loan Account Number
1. Nagendra A Y (Applicant), **2. Nagendra A Y** (Co-Applicant), **3. Bhagyamma G** (Co-Applicant) **Lan: S166207000001**
Demand Notice Date and Amount With NPA Date
31.12.2025 / Rs. 5,79,855/- (Rupees Five Lakhs Seventy Nine Thousand Eight Hundred Fifty Five Only) as on **30.12.2025 (NPA) on 29.12.2025**
Description Of Secured Assets (Immovable Property)
All that piece and parcel of immovable Property bearing Southern Portion of Site No.152, Khatha No.591/152, PID No.150200100200101006, Situated at Bidaraguppe Village, Attibele Hobli, Anekal Taluk, Bangalore Urban District, measuring East to West 40 feet and North to South 15 feet, in all measuring 600 Square feet, **East:** Site No.207, **West:** Road, **North:** Remaining Portion of Site No. 152, **South:** Site No.151.

Sd/-
Place : Bangalore / Harapanahalli, Karnataka **Authorized Officer**
Date : 12.02.2026 **Invent Assets Securitization and Reconstruction Pvt. Ltd.**

QUICK READ

MCOCA invoked in Rohit Shetty firing

Mumbai

Mumbai Police have applied the strict MCOCA law against those accused of firing at filmmaker Rohit Shetty's home in Juhu earlier this month. Five people have been arrested so far. The shooting happened around 12.45 am on February 1, when five bullets were fired at the building, and one hit a gym window. Police said some accused have serious criminal records. A member of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang has claimed responsibility and remains wanted.

CBSE introduces online marking for Class 12

New Delhi

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) will start on-screen marking for Class 12 board exam papers from 2026. Class 10 papers will still be checked in the usual physical way. Officials said the new system will reduce errors and speed up results. Teachers can check papers online from their schools. Schools must provide proper computers, internet, and power supply. CBSE warned that failing to follow rules may delay a school's results.

Shinde defends Salman's presence at RSS event

Mumbai

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde defended the RSS for inviting actor Salman Khan to an event addressed by RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat in Mumbai. Shinde asked what was wrong in inviting Khan, calling him a proud Indian who respects the country's culture. The event was part of the RSS centenary celebrations. Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut criticised the move, while BJP minister Nitesh Rane praised Khan for attending the programme.

'India emerges as key leader of Global South'

South Africa's envoy highlighted India's Global South Summit, PM Modi's global respect and india's economic growth

NEW DELHI

South Africa's envoy praised India's leadership in addressing major challenges faced by developing nations worldwide.

South Africa's High Commissioner to India, Anil Sooklal, said India is not only a strong voice but also a leading initiator in solving key problems of the Global South. He highlighted India's long-standing commitment to developing nations since its independence.

He praised India's G20 Presidency in 2023, noting that Prime Minister Narendra Modi played a key role in making the African Union a full member of the G20. Sooklal said the entire African continent appreciated India's effort to include Africa in major global discussions.

He also mentioned the Voice of the Global South Summit, started during India's presidency and chaired by PM Modi. The summit focused on issues faced by developing countries and aimed to find collective solutions.

Sooklal said PM Modi is widely respected around the world and his presence at global forums like G20 and BRICS adds importance to discussions. He noted that under Modi's leadership, India's economy has more than doubled in the past decade and the country has become the world's fourth-largest economy. He added that millions of people have been lifted out of poverty.

The envoy also spoke about Bangladesh, expressing hope that upcoming elections there will lead to the return of a democratically elected government. He stressed that democracy is essential for stable societies and said a peaceful and fair election in Bangladesh would benefit the region and the global community.

Rahul attacks govt over India-US trade deal

NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi strongly criticised the BJP government during the Lok Sabha debate on the Union Budget 2026-27. He accused the Centre of agreeing to an "unequal" India-US trade deal under pressure and claimed the country's interests were being compromised.

Gandhi alleged that the United States was setting unfair conditions, including asking India to stop buying Russian oil while keeping high tariffs on Indian goods. He said India had reduced its tariffs to zero but was not treated equally. He also made sharp remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, claiming the government was acting out of fear.

Speaking about global trends, Gandhi said the world is moving from stability to instability. He pointed to rising geopolitical tensions, challenges to US dominance by China and Russia, and the use of energy and finance as political tools. He said the global order is changing and becoming unpredictable.

Gandhi highlighted the importance of Indian data, calling it a valuable asset in the global power struggle between the US and China. He said India's population is a strength only if its data is protected. He added that if the I.N.D.I.A. bloc were negotiating with US President Donald Trump, they would prioritise India's data and energy security.

Warning about global instability during the Budget debate, the LoP said Indian data and farmers' interests must be protected at all costs

He warned that farmers could suffer due to the trade framework and said sectors like textiles were already facing difficulties. Gandhi also raised concerns about artificial intelligence, saying many jobs in engineering and IT could be at risk. Other Opposition leaders also criticised the government during the debate.

Delhi HC rejects Vikas Yadav's furlough request

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday dismissed a plea by Nitish Katara murder convict Vikas Yadav seeking 21 days' furlough to maintain social ties and spend time with his wife following his recent marriage.

A single-judge bench of Justice Ravinder Dudeja held that there was no arbitrariness, illegality, or violation of constitutional rights in the October 29, 2025, order and subsequent corrigendum rejecting Yadav's request for release. "This Court finds no arbitrariness or illegality… The petition is accordingly dismissed," Justice Dudeja said. Yadav, convicted in the 2002 Nitish Katara murder case, is serving a 25-year fixed sentence and has completed over 23 years in jail. In his plea, he argued that he had previously been granted interim bail by the Supreme Court for over four and a half months for his mother's medical treatment, which was later extended on account of his marriage. He claimed he now sought temporary release to maintain social ties, particularly with his wife.

Prison authorities opposed the plea, citing the gravity of the offence, severity of the sentence, and absence of required conduct reports.

Vir Das reacts to parliament mention of monologue

NEW DELHI

Comedian Vir Das reacted after his monologue was cited during a heated Budget debate in Parliament.

Actor-comedian Vir Das on Tuesday expressed surprise after Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee referred to his 2021 stand-up monologue Two Indias in the Lok Sabha. The reference came during a discussion on the Union Budget 2026-27.

In a video shared on social media, Vir appeared shocked that his show was mentioned in Parliament. He asked jokingly if it was really being discussed on the floor of the House. Reacting to Banerjee calling the monologue a "warning" and a "prophecy," Vir said that many newspapers had described it differently at the time. He added humorously that instead of giving a warning, he had received many warnings himself and had faced strong backlash in 2021. He even joked that he had to hide at home for a long time after the controversy. Banerjee had used the monologue while criticising the BJP-led government, saying the Budget showed a divided country. He described Two Indias as not just comedy but a mirror to the nation's contradictions.

Responding to Vir's video, Banerjee posted on X that the situation showed the "beauty of two Indias." He said in one India, a comedian is questioned for speaking about division, while in another, the same debate helps promote a world tour. He wished Vir success for his upcoming shows.

Vir ended his video by announcing his international tour titled Hey Stranger, saying he was leaving the country for a world tour and felt it was the right time to share the news.

Calcutta HC grants anticipatory bail to BJP MLA

KOLKATA

The Calcutta High Court on Wednesday granted anticipatory bail to Bengali actor and BJP MLA Hiran Chatterjee in a bigamy case filed by his first wife, Anindita Chatterjee, at Anandpur police station.

The bench of Justice Jay Sengupta allowed the bail on the condition that Hiran must appear before the investigating officer once every 15 days.

Hiran, who represents the Kharagpur Sadar Assembly constituency, joined the BJP ahead of the 2021 West Bengal Assembly polls and won the election. His first wife filed a complaint after photographs of his second wedding to model Ritika Giri in January went viral on social media. The marriage took place in Varanasi, with the bride in a red Banarasi saree and Chatterjee in a yellow kurta.

The police registered a case under Section 494 (bigamy) and Section 85 (domestic violence) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. Anindita alleged that the second marriage was illegal, claiming they were neither divorced nor legally separated, and said it harmed their family, particularly their daughter.

Maoist commander with 2 associates held in Jharkhand

LATEHAR

A Maoist commander with a Rs 50,000 reward on his head was arrested along with two associates in Jharkhand's Latehar district on Wednesday, police said. The arrested commander, Adesh Ganjhu, is an active member of the banned Tritiya Sammelan Prastuti Committee (TSPC). His associates, Ujjwal Kumar and Subhash Kumar, were also taken into custody. Police recovered illegal firearms, ammunition, and documents related to extremist activities from their possession.

MP raises alarm over social media impact

NEW DELHI

Congress Rajya Sabha MP Jebi Mather Hisham on Wednesday raised concern over the growing mental health crisis among teenagers due to excessive use of social media. Speaking during Zero Hour, she said many young people are unable to tell the difference between the real world and the virtual world.

Hisham referred to a recent incident near Kochi, where a 16-year-old girl allegedly died by suicide after grieving the death of an online friend. She said she spoke to the girl's teacher and principal, who shared worries about how online platforms are shaping young minds. According to her, adolescents are creating virtual worlds and getting deeply influenced by online content, including Korean shows, pop culture and internet games.

The MP also mentioned the reported suicide of three sisters in Ghaziabad, claiming that case too had links to Korean online content. She said such incidents show how children, who should be learning and enjoying their school life, are instead taking extreme steps.

Hisham stressed that the issue needs urgent attention from the government.

KARNATAKA HOUSING BOARD
3rd Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bengaluru - 560009.

TENDER NOTIFICATION
(Through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal only)

Karnataka Housing Board invite tender through Karnataka public procurement portal for below mentioned work.

Last date for submission of bid: 16.02.2026 upto 4.00 PM

Name of the work : Providing 1 No of 11 KV MCVCB switchgear for arranging power supply to KHB layout behind DC office, Koppal district **Work Indent :** KHB/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT 686/CALL-2 & IFT No.133/2025-26 Date: 07.02.2026. **Amount put to tender:** Rs.36,74,610/-

For further information, contact below mentioned office address: Executive Engineer, Karnataka Housing Board, Cauvery Bhavan, Bengaluru. Telephone No: 080-22273511/080-22100077, Website: **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in**

DIPR/CP/5587 /AKAR/2025-26

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Karnataka Housing Board, Bengaluru

GOPI DEFENDS UNION BUDGET, QUESTIONS KERALA OVER AIIMS DELAY

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Union Minister of State for Tourism Suresh Gopi on Wednesday defended the Union Budget 2026–27, calling criticism against it "politically motivated" and asserting that the financial plan focuses on long-term national growth rather than electoral gains.

Speaking as part of a Centre-directed outreach programme, Gopi said the Budget aligns with India's roadmap for 2047, marking 100 years of independence. "The Budget envisions what India should become by 2047," he noted, adding that much criticism arises from viewing it through an election lens.

Addressing questions on Kerala's AIIMS allocation, Gopi said the premier medical institute was announced for the state in 2016 and questioned the state government's role in facilitating the project. He reiterated that Alappuzha should be the preferred location due to its developmental needs but said efforts could shift to Thrissur if land is not available in Alappuzha.

Gopi, the first BJP MP to win decisively from Thrissur, stressed that AIIMS will come to Kerala if the state acts promptly to provide suitable land. His remarks highlight ongoing debates between the Centre and Kerala over major infrastructure and healthcare projects.

With elections approaching, the AIIMS issue remains politically sensitive, reflecting tensions between the Centre and state government over accountability and development priorities.

SC reduces 'faulty haircut' compensation to Rs 25L

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on February 6 reduced compensation in a "faulty haircut" case from Rs 2 crore to Rs 25 lakh, stressing that awards cannot be based on whims or assumptions.

Aashna Roy, a management professional, had visited the ITC Maurya Hotel salon in April 2018. She claimed the stylist cut her hair much shorter than requested, causing mental trauma and the loss of modelling assignments. The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) initially awarded her Rs 2 crore. After reassessment, the NCDRC again upheld the same amount in April 2023.

The apex court bench, comprising Justices Rajesh Bindal and Manmohan, noted that while a deficiency in service was proven, compensation must rely on "material evidence" and not the "mere asking" of the complainant. Justice Bindal said, "Damages cannot be awarded merely on presumptions or whims and fancies of the complainant. Trustworthy and reliable evidence is required, especially when claims run into crores." The court found that photocopies of documents submitted by Roy were insufficient to justify such a huge award. Even if the originals were unavailable, the NCDRC should have examined other ways to assess actual loss.

INVENT ASSETS SECURITISATION & RECONSTRUCTION PRIVATE LIMITED invent
Regd. Office : Bakhtawar, Suite 'B', Ground Floor, Backbay Reclamation Scheme, Block III, 229, Nariman Point, Mumbai - 400021.

DEMAND NOTICE

Under Section 13(2) of the Securitization And Reconstruction Of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002, read with Rule 3(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002. The undersigned is the authorized officer of **Invent Assets Securitisation & Reconstruction Private Limited ("Invent")** .Under Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 (The said Act). In exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(2) of the said Act read with Rule 3(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, the authorized officer has issued demand notices under 13(2) of the said Act, calling upon the borrower(s) [The "said borrower(s)"], to repay the amounts mentioned in the respective demand notice(s) issued to them that are also given below. In connection with above, notice is hereby given, once again, to the said borrower(s) to pay to **Invent Assets Securitisation & Reconstruction Private Limited ("Invent")** , within sixty days from the publication of this notice, the amounts indicated herein below, together with further interest as detailed in the said demand notice(s), from the date(s) mentioned below till the date of payment and/or realization, payable under the loan agreement read with other documents/ writings, if any, executed by the said borrower(s). As Security for due repayment of the loan, the following assets have been mortgaged to **Invent Assets Securitisation & Reconstruction Private Limited ("Invent")** by the said borrower(s) respectively.

Name of the Borrower(s)/Co-Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) Loan Account Number
1. B Jyothi (Applicant), **2. Jyothi Basavarajappa** (Co-Applicant), **3. Gurunath M G** (Co-Applicant) **Lan: 1192020100168**
Demand Notice Date and Amount With NPA Date
31.12.2025 / Rs. 3,88,946/- (Rupees Three Lakhs Eighty Eight Thousand Nine Hundred Forty Six Only) as on **30.12.2025 (NPA) on 29.12.2025**
Description Of Secured Assets (Immovable Property)
All that piece and parcel of Property No 228, E Swathu No 151200202200100264, Measuring 9.7536 X 4.2672 Mts, i.e., 41.62 sq Mts, situated at Mayakonda village, Mayakonda Gram Panchayath, Davangere. **East:** Road, **West:** Site of Gopalappa, **North:** Site of Latha, **South:** Road.
Name of the Borrower(s)/Co-Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) Loan Account Number
1. Raghavendra MD (Applicant), **2. Raghavendra MD** (Co-Applicant), **3. Santhosha M D** (Co-Applicant) **Lan: 1192020100106**
Demand Notice Date and Amount With NPA Date
31.12.2025 / Rs. 4,74,262/- (Rupees Four Lakhs Seventy Four Thousand Two Hundred Sixty Two Only) as on **30.12.2025 (NPA) on 29.12.2025**
Description Of Secured Assets (Immovable Property)
All that piece and parcel of Site No 102, measuring 30 X 20 Fts i.e 600 Sq Fts, situated at 2nd Ward, 2nd Divison, Northern Portion of Kondajji Road, Vijay Nagar Badavane, Davangere. **East:** Site No 88, **West:** Road, **North:** Site No. 101, **South:** Site No. 103.

Sd/-
Place : Davangere, Karnataka
Date : 12.02.2026
Authorized Officer
Invent Assets Securitization and Reconstruction Pvt. Ltd.

PHOTO ROW

Cong alleges pressure on Tendulkar to delete post with Rahul

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala unit of the Congress on Wednesday alleged that cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar faced pressure to delete and repost a photograph with Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi after it received high attention online.

Tendulkar had met several top political leaders in New Delhi on Tuesday to invite them to the wedding of his son, Arjun Tendulkar. He shared pictures of his meetings on social media.

According to Congress Kerala, Tendulkar posted a photo with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at 7:13 pm, followed by one with Union Home Minister Amit Shah at 8:18 pm, and another with President Droupadi Murmu at 8:48 pm. A picture with Rahul Gandhi was shared at 9:22 pm.

The party claimed that the photo with Gandhi quickly went viral and received about 6.27 lakh views within two hours, which was higher than the other posts. In a message on X, the Congress unit alleged that this strong response did not go down well with "the King," without naming anyone directly.

The post further claimed that Tendulkar was pressured by "the King's men" to delete the picture and repost it at 12:19 am, when fewer people would be active online. The Congress said people had already noticed the change.

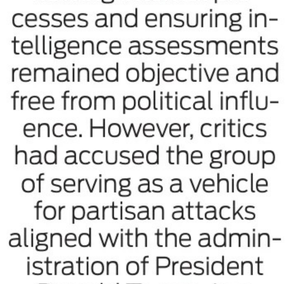
Taking a swipe at the central leadership, the party said that if someone in the highest position feels insecure about social media views, it shows weakness rather than strength. There was no immediate response from Tendulkar or the leaders mentioned.

QUICK READ

10 dead in high school shooting in Western Canada

British Columbia

Ten people, including the assailant, were killed after a shooter opened fire at a high school in the town of Tumbler Ridge in western Canada, marking one of the country's deadliest mass casualty events in recent years. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) confirmed that six victims were found dead inside the high school. Two additional bodies were discovered at a nearby residence believed to be connected to the incident, while another victim died en route to hospital. Police described the shooter as female but did not immediately release further details about her identity or possible motive. Authorities also confirmed that the suspect was among the dead. It was not immediately clear whether she died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound or as a result of police action.



Gabbard disbands intelligence task force amid criticism of bias

Washington

U.S. Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard said that she has wound down a task force she launched last year aimed at rooting out what she described as politicization within America's intelligence agencies. The unit, known as the Director's Initiatives Group (DIG), was created with the stated mission of reviewing internal processes and ensuring intelligence assessments remained objective and free from political influence. However, critics had accused the group of serving as a vehicle for partisan attacks aligned with the administration of President Donald Trump. In a statement to Reuters, Gabbard confirmed that she had reassigned members of the DIG to other roles within the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), effectively bringing the task force's work to a close.

US eyes defence push in B'desh to counter growing Chinese influence

China recently signed a defence agreement with Bangladesh to build a drone factory near the India border, worrying foreign diplomats.

DHAKA

The United States has expressed growing unease over China's increasing strategic and defence presence in Bangladesh and wider South Asia, signalling plans to offer American and allied military systems as alternatives to Chinese hardware.

In an interview with Reuters, U.S. Ambassador to Dhaka Brent T. Christensen said Washington is closely monitoring Beijing's expanding role in the region. He emphasised that the U.S. remains committed to engaging with Bangladesh's next government following Thursday's general election.

Bangladesh heads to the polls after a dramatic political shift in August 2024, when a Gen Z-led uprising led to the ouster of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Hasina, long considered aligned with India, subsequently took refuge in New Delhi. Her exit has altered the regional power balance, with diplomats observing that China has moved swiftly to deepen its influence as India's presence in Dhaka appears to wane.

China recently signed a defence agreement with Bangladesh to establish a drone manufacturing facility near the Indian border. The development has reportedly raised concerns among foreign diplomats and regional observers, given its potential strategic implications.

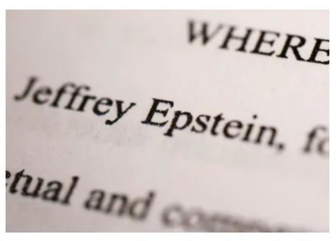
In addition, Bangladesh is said to be in discussions with Pakistan to acquire JF-17 Thunder fighter jets — a multi-role combat aircraft jointly developed by Pakistan and China. The possible deal further underscores Dhaka's evolving defence partnerships and Beijing's growing footprint in the country's military infrastructure.

The United States is concerned about growing Chinese influence in South Asia and is committed to working closely with the Bangladeshi government to clearly communicate the risks of certain types of engagement with China, Ambassador Christensen said.

He added that Washington is prepared to provide Bangladesh with alternative defence options. The U.S. offers a range of options to help Bangladesh meet its military capability needs, including U.S. systems and those from allied partners, to provide alternatives to Chinese systems, he said, without elaborating on specific platforms or timelines.

Council of Europe strips ex-head of immunity over Epstein probe

COPENHAGEN



The probe follows newly-released files connected to Epstein, who died in a US prison in 2019 while awaiting trial on federal sex trafficking charge

The Council of Europe, Europe's leading human rights watchdog, has agreed to lift the diplomatic immunity of its former secretary general Thorbjoern Jagland, clearing the way for Norwegian authorities to investigate his alleged links to convicted U.S. sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

Norway's white-collar crimes unit has opened a formal investigation into Jagland on suspicion of aggravated corruption. The probe follows newly released files connected to Epstein, who died in a US prison in 2019 while awaiting trial on federal sex trafficking charges. Authorities have not publicly detailed the exact nature of Jagland's alleged connection to Epstein but confirmed that the investigation is based on information emerging from the recently disclosed documents.

Jagland served as Secretary General of the Council of Europe from 2009 to 2019. He previously held several prominent roles in Norway, including prime minister, foreign minister and chair of the Nobel Peace Prize committee. During his tenure at the Strasbourg-based institution, he oversaw key human rights initiatives across the continent.

Under the Council of Europe's rules, senior officials are granted diplomatic immunity to protect the independence of the organisation's work. However, such immunity can be lifted if member states agree it is necessary for legal proceedings. Norway's foreign ministry formally requested the removal of Jagland's immunity, asking the 46 member nations represented in the Committee of Ministers to approve the move. The request was granted, allowing police to proceed with their inquiry.

Jagland's lawyer, Anders Brosveet, said the decision to lift immunity was expected and confirmed that his client would cooperate fully with investigators.

He takes this matter very seriously, but wishes to emphasize that he believes there are no circumstances that constitute criminal liability, Brosveet said in a statement. The development marks a significant step in the widening scrutiny linked to Epstein's international network of contacts, as authorities in multiple countries continue to assess potential legal ramifications stemming from newly surfaced documents.

'Russia will seek clarification from US on Venezuela oil restrictions'

MOSCOW

Russia plans to seek explanations from the United States over new restrictions linked to Venezuela's oil sector, escalating tensions over Washington's sanctions policy. The Kremlin said it will use diplomatic channels to clarify a U.S. Treasury licence that allows oil and gas exploration in Venezuela but excludes transactions involving Russian and Chinese entities. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov noted that Russia has significant investments and long-term energy projects in Venezuela and wants to understand how the measures affect them. The dispute reflects deep ties between Moscow and Caracas, built through energy cooperation, arms sales and political backing. Russian firm Roszarubezhneft holds Venezuelan assets previously owned by Rosneft subsidiaries targeted by U.S. sanctions. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov called the exclusions discriminatory and said Moscow is engaging Washington while advocating cooperation without domination. The U.S. licence is part of a broader easing of sanctions following political changes in Caracas, yet it bars Russian and Chinese participation, drawing criticism from both countries and highlighting competition over Venezuela's vast oil reserves and global influence there.

Thailand's election commission faces pressure over vote transparency

BANGKOK

Thailand's Election Commission is under growing pressure to address claims of irregularities in vote counting across more than a dozen constituencies after Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul's party secured a sweeping victory in Sunday's general election.

Soon after polls closed at 5 p.m. (1000 GMT), social media platforms were flooded with posts alleging inconsistencies in ballot counting procedures. Videos circulated online appeared to show ballots being counted in poorly lit conditions, while other posts claimed that valid votes had been incorrectly marked as spoiled.

Some users also pointed to discrepancies between vote totals recorded at polling stations and figures uploaded to the Election Commission's online reporting system. Reuters said it was unable to independently verify the authenticity of the claims.

The Bhumjaithai Party, led by Anutin, emerged as the clear winner of the election, outperforming pre-election projections. The People's Party, which had topped most opinion polls ahead of the vote, finished a distant second.

Despite accepting the overall outcome, the People's Party has formally requested recounts in 18 constituencies where concerns have been raised. Meanwhile, the third-placed Pheu Thai Party has backed calls for reviews in areas where members of the public have expressed doubts about the results.

The pro-military United Thai Nation Party went further, urging a nationwide recount to ensure full transparency and restore public confidence in the electoral process.

Rukchanok Srinork, a victorious candidate from the People's Party, questioned the commission's reluctance to immediately initiate broader recounts.

If the election commission didn't do anything wrong, a recount no matter how many times would lead to the same result, she told reporters. Then, why not do a recount, so that people can see the result clearly?

The controversy has intensified public debate over electoral transparency in Thailand, with observers warning that the credibility of the democratic process could be undermined if concerns are not addressed swiftly and transparently.

Philippines urges China to keep tone 'calm' as rhetoric heats up

BEIJING

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) on Wednesday urged the Chinese Embassy in Manila to adopt a more constructive tone amid an intensifying exchange of statements between Chinese diplomats and Philippine public officials, including members of the Senate.

Rogelio Villanueva, the DFA's newly appointed maritime affairs spokesperson, emphasized the need for professionalism and restraint in diplomatic communications.

The DFA values candid and vigorous debate with its foreign counterparts on important issues consistent with the Philippines' democratic tradition, Villanueva said. He added that responses should be delivered in a calm and professional manner, underscoring Manila's preference for measured engagement despite rising tensions.

The latest flare-up follows the Philippine Senate's approval of a resolution condemning recent statements issued by the Chinese Embassy. The embassy had criticized Philippine officials for defending the country's sovereignty and maritime rights in the disputed South China Sea.

In response, the Chinese Embassy rejected and condemned the Senate resolution, describing it as a political stunt. The embassy did not immediately respond to media requests for further comment on Wednesday.

The diplomatic friction reflects broader strains between Manila and Beijing over territorial and maritime disputes in the South China Sea, a strategically vital waterway claimed in part by multiple countries. The Philippines has repeatedly asserted its sovereign rights in its exclusive economic zone, while China maintains expansive claims that overlap with those of several Southeast Asian nations.

Lula's middle-class tax cut bolsters economic momentum

BRASILIA

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva is gaining fresh political momentum as a proposed middle-class income tax break promises to nearly halve the number of Brazilians who pay federal income taxes.

The measure, a central pledge from Lula's 2022 presidential campaign, is designed to expand his appeal beyond his traditional lower-income support base. By targeting middle-income earners, the initiative signals a broader political strategy aimed at consolidating support across a wider cross-section of Brazilian society as Lula prepares to seek another term in office.

Economists say the tax relief could inject additional stimulus into an economy that, while not booming, is showing steady improvement. By reducing the tax burden on millions of households, the policy is expected to increase disposable income and consumer spending — key drivers of Brazil's domestic growth.

Recent economic indicators have strengthened Lula's position. Brazil's unemployment rate has fallen to a record low, reflecting a tightening labor market. At the same time, median wages have reached historic highs, helping families better cope with the cost of living. Inflation, particularly for food — a politically sensitive issue in Latin America's largest economy — has cooled significantly compared to previous peaks.

The easing of inflationary pressures has also opened the door for monetary policy adjustments. Brazil's central bank is widely expected to begin cutting interest rates next month, a move that could further stimulate credit growth and business investment.

Together, these factors have created favorable economic tailwinds for Lula at a critical political juncture. Early opinion polls suggest he holds an advantage as he lays the groundwork for a reelection campaign, though analysts caution that Brazil's economic outlook remains vulnerable to global market volatility and domestic fiscal challenges.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

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2	6	1	8	7	3	9	4	5
4	7	9	1	5	2	6	8	3
6	4	2	7	1	8	5	3	9
9	5	7	4	3	6	8	1	2
3	1	8	2	9	5	4	6	7

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

MEET OF THE TITANS

Netanyahu to push Trump on Iran missiles

JERUSALEM

U.S. President Donald Trump is set to host Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House on Wednesday, with Iran expected to dominate the agenda as regional tensions continue to escalate.

The meeting marks Netanyahu's seventh visit with Trump since the U.S. president returned to office nearly 13 months ago. Israeli officials say Netanyahu intends to urge Washington to broaden its ongoing discussions with Iran beyond Tehran's nuclear programme to also address its ballistic missile arsenal and other regional security concerns.

The talks come on the heels of recent U.S.-Iran nuclear negotiations held in Oman last Friday. While diplomatic efforts are underway, rhetoric from both sides has intensified. Trump has publicly warned that the United States could carry out military strikes if a new agreement is not reached. Tehran, in turn, has vowed retaliation against any attack, heightening fears of a wider Middle East conflict.

In a series of media interviews, Trump reiterated his firm stance. He said he believes Iran is interested in reaching a deal but warned that Washington would respond decisively if negotiations fail.

Speaking to Fox Business, Trump stated that a good deal with Iran would mean no nuclear weapons, no missiles, though he did not provide further details on the framework being discussed. In a separate interview with Axios, he revealed he was considering deploying a second aircraft carrier strike group as part of a significant buildup of U.S. forces near Iran.

The United States has long been one of Israel's closest allies, and Trump has repeatedly emphasized his commitment to Israel's security. Israel views Iran as its primary regional adversary, citing Tehran's nuclear ambitions, missile development, and support for proxy groups across the region as existential threats.

Wednesday's meeting is expected to shape the next phase of U.S.-Iran diplomacy, with Netanyahu aiming to ensure that any future agreement addresses what Israel considers the full spectrum of Iranian military capabilities, not just its nuclear programme.

Passing Ethanol Benefits to Sugarcane Farmers:
A Pathway to a Fairer FRP

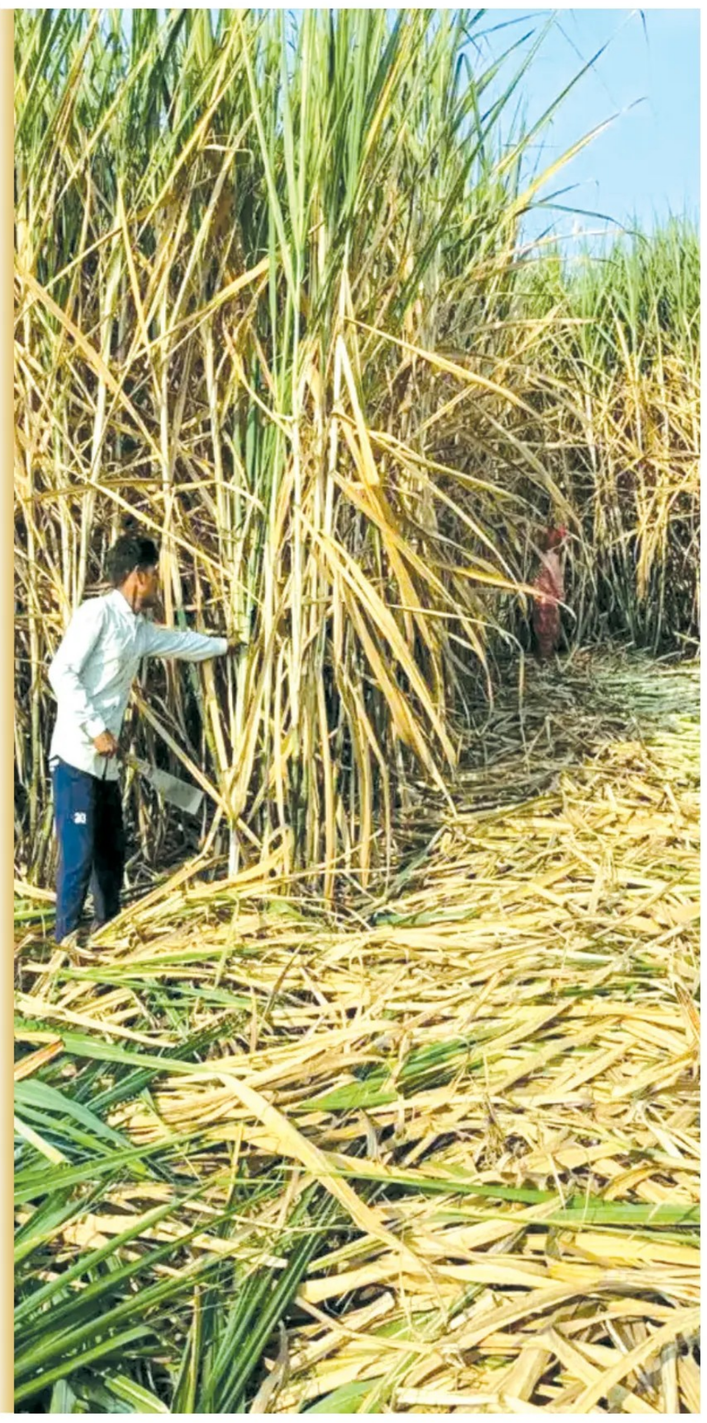
BASANAGOUDA SUDI

India's rapid expansion of its ethanol-blending programme has opened a structural opportunity to improve the income security of nearly 5 crore sugarcane farmers. Ethanol blending has grown from 1.5% in 2013–14 to 12% in 2023–24, saving ₹24,300 crore in foreign exchange and reducing 120 lakh tonnes of CO_2 emissions last year alone. What began as an energy-security measure has now evolved into a stabiliser for the sugar economy.

India produces around 33 million tonnes of sugar annually, while domestic consumption is about 27 million tonnes, leaving a recurring surplus of 5–6 million tonnes. Diverting this surplus to ethanol helps mills avoid inventory pile-up, improves liquidity, and enables more timely payment of cane bills. The Centre has targeted diversion of 60 lakh tonnes of sugar into ethanol by 2025–26 — a shift with major implications for farmer incomes.

WHY ETHANOL MATTERS FOR FARMERS

Sugar mills earn significantly more when they divert cane juice or B-heavy molasses towards ethanol production. The Government has fixed ethanol procurement prices for 2024–25 at ₹49.41/litre for C-heavy molasses, ₹60.73 for B-heavy, and ₹65.60 for cane juice. As a result, mills earn 20–25% higher net realisations when they opt for ethanol routes. This improved liquidity has directly reduced farmer distress: national cane arrears fell from ₹10,000 crore (2018–19) to less than ₹3,000 crore (2023–24). States with high ethanol diversification demonstrate clear outcomes. In Maharashtra and Karnataka, cooperative mills that diverted 20–25% of cane juice to ethanol cleared 100% of their dues well before the off-season. In Uttar Pradesh, mills using the B-heavy route have paid farmers ₹330 per quintal, above the FRP of ₹315.



THIS SYSTEM HAS THREE MAJOR OUTCOMES:

- Zero cane arrears, even in low-price years
- Predictable incomes for both farmers and mills
- Long-term investment in cogeneration, biofuels, and circular-economy models (bagasse power, vinasse-based fertilisers)

The Brazilian Benchmark

Brazil offers a compelling model. Its sugar and ethanol sectors operate under a flexible production system that allows mills to switch between sugar and ethanol based on market conditions. More importantly, Brazil follows the CONSECANA revenue-sharing formula, which ensures growers receive a fixed share (around 60%) of the combined revenue from sugar and ethanol.

CAN INDIA ADOPT SUCH A MODEL?

India already has the foundation for a more integrated pricing system. The Rangarajan Committee recommended linking cane prices to sugar and by-product realisations, but its adoption has been uneven. With ethanol now forming a substantial share of mill revenue — over ₹25,000 crore in 2023–24 — the time is ripe to incorporate ethanol benefits into cane pricing. Several mechanisms can help ensure the gains of the ethanol programme flow directly to Frs.

Ethanol-linked FRP

FRP (Fair and Remunerative Price) can be calculated using a formula that averages sugar and ethanol realisations. Even a modest pass-through of ethanol profitability can raise cane prices by ₹10–₹15 per quintal without burdening mills.

A Fairer FRP for a New Sugar Economy

India's ethanol programme has matured into a pillar of both energy security and rural development. The next logical step is to institutionalise the sharing of ethanol gains with the growers who sustain the sector. Linking FRP with ethanol revenues, adopting flexible production systems, and ensuring transparent revenue-sharing can create a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable sugar economy.

If implemented well, India can replicate Brazil's achievement: stable prices, zero arrears, and rising farmer incomes — transforming sugarcane from a politically sensitive crop into a driver of green economic growth.

REVENUE-SHARING MODEL

- An adapted version of Brazil's CONSECANA can be implemented through State-level committees with farmer representation.
- Payment-linked ethanol financing
- Escrow mechanism for ethanol payments
- Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) may route ethanol revenues through escrow accounts ensuring that farmer dues are settled before mill operational costs.
- Incentives for cane varieties suited to ethanol
- Farmers growing high-sucrose or ethanol-friendly cane varieties can be offered bonuses funded by a share of ethanol profits.
- Economic and Environmental Gains.

Zoom Expands Partnership with DEF to Boost Digital Inclusion in Karnataka

BANGALORE

Zoom Communications, Inc. (NASDAQ: ZM) on Wednesday, announced the expansion of its collaboration with the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) reinforcing Zoom's commitment to digital inclusion, economic opportunity, and human connection in India. The initiative will advance access to digital skills and tools across remote and underserved districts of Karnataka.

The initiative will support 55 community-led Digital Access Centers to help build skills, enable e-commerce, and inclusive digital participation.

Building on earlier collaborations in Telangana and Madhya Pradesh, this latest collaboration will support the establishment of 55 Digital Access Centers across Karnataka, designed as community-led hubs for digital connectivity, skills training, and inclusive economic participation. The centers are expected to train more than 16,500 micro-entrepreneurs and artisans and reach over 110,000 citizens, enabling them to participate more fully in the digital economy.

"Access to technology is the foundation for inclusive growth in an increasingly digital and AI-driven world, but it is human connection that turns access into opportunity," said Aparna Bawa, Chief Operating Officer, Zoom. "Through our continued collaboration with DEF, we're helping communities across India build the skills, confidence, and support they need to participate meaningfully and thrive in the digital economy, wherever they are.

Participants will use digital tools, including Zoom's AI-first open work platform, to connect with markets, access services, build digital storefronts, collaborate virtually, and grow their enterprises online.

A key focus of the Karnataka initiative is empowering artisans and micro-entrepreneurs working within Geographical Indication (GI)-tagged industries. Through hands-on training in digital marketing, storytelling, and virtual business collaboration, these centres will enable participants to use online tools to bring region-specific crafts and products to wider markets, preserving cultural heritage while creating new income opportunities.

Founded in 2002, DEF works to bridge India's digital divide through a community-driven, hyperlocal model led by women social entrepreneurs known as SoochnaPreneurs. Equipped with digital skills and infrastructure, SoochnaPreneurs support village-level communities in accessing healthcare, education, jobs, financial services, and livelihood opportunities. With a network that has reached more than 10,000 villages and served over 35 million people, DEF continues to lead efforts connecting remote communities and advancing digital literacy and livelihoods across India.

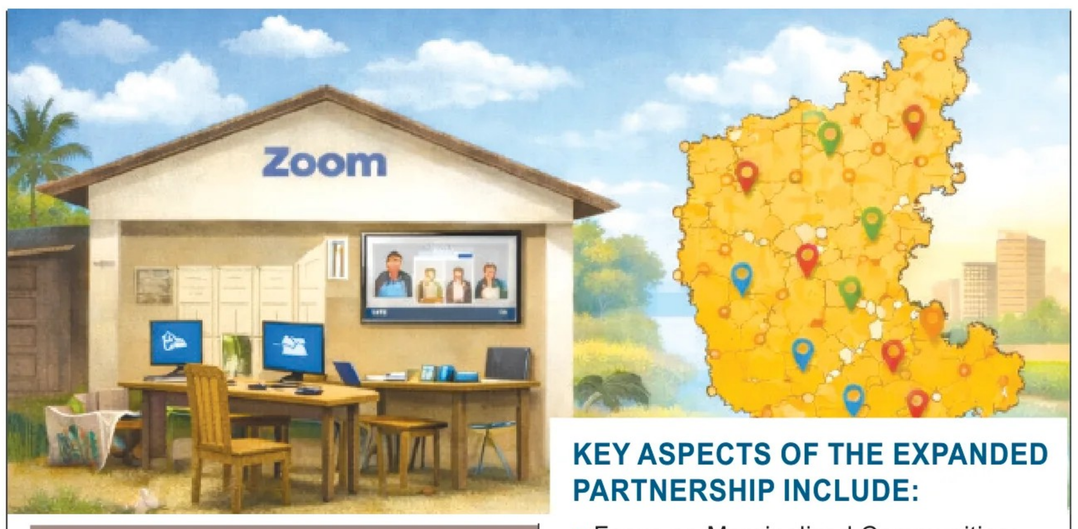
"Our continued collaboration with Zoom is helping to bridge India's digital divide from the ground up while building a digital dividend among the most marginalized communities," said Osama Manzar, Founder & Director, Digital Empowerment Foundation. "As technology rapidly evolves, we want to ensure that no one is left behind. By combining DEF's grassroots reach with Zoom's technology and resources, we're empowering communities to connect and build sustainable livelihoods."

This initiative builds on Zoom Cares's philanthropic efforts in India, which also include collaborations with Head Held High Foundation, CyberPeace Foundation, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Women's Collective, and Goonj. In late 2025, Zoom made a US$10 million three-year commitment to AI for Good to help build AI readiness and positive societal impact.

Together, Zoom and DEF are building inclusive, community-led pathways to digital opportunity where access to technology is paired with skills, support, and human connection. As India's digital economy continues to grow, this collaboration reflects our long-term commitment to ensuring that progress is shared and opportunity reaches those who need it.

ABOUT ZOOM

Zoom (NASDAQ:ZM) provides the AI-first, open work platform built for human connection and purposefully designed to move conversations to completion. From entrepreneurs to global enterprises, customers choose Zoom to seamlessly collaborate, communicate, and drive outcomes across meetings, chat, phone, contact center, events, and more — all with the built-in assistance of Zoom AI Companion. Founded in 2011, Zoom is headquartered in San Jose, CA. For more information, visit zoom.com.



KEY INITIATIVE DETAILS

- **Grassroots Impact: The partnership leverages DEF's extensive network—which includes over 2,400 community-based digital access centres—to bring Zoom's communication technology to remote areas.**
- **Focus on Livelihoods: Beyond basic connectivity, the program focuses on building "digital dividends" for underserved groups, helping them create sustainable income sources in an increasingly digital economy.**
- **Long-term Commitment: This move is part of Zoom's broader $10 million, three-year commitment to "AI for Good," which focuses on building AI readiness and positive societal impact.**
- **Regional Strategic Goals: By specifically targeting Karnataka, the initiative supports the state's vision of becoming a global hub for digital literacy and safe technology use.**

KEY ASPECTS OF THE EXPANDED PARTNERSHIP INCLUDE:

- Focus on Marginalized Communities: The initiative prioritizes providing digital skills and tools to underserved populations, following previous efforts that trained 10,000 women entrepreneurs across seven Indian states.
- "Digital Sarthaks" Program: The partnership leverages trained volunteers known as "Digital Sarthaks" to lead capacity-building activities and establish digital centers.
- Philanthropic Support: This partnership is part of a broader philanthropic effort by Zoom Cares, which in late 2025 committed US$10 million over three years to "AI for Good" to promote positive societal impact.
- Broadened Reach: In addition to DEF, Zoom Cares in India collaborates with organizations such as the Head Held High Foundation, CyberPeace Foundation, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Women's Collective, and Goonj.

Key Initiative Details

- Digital Access Centers (DACs): The partnership will establish 55 new Digital Access Centers across Karnataka. These hubs act as community-led centers for digital connectivity, skills training, and inclusive economic participation.
- Target Impact: The program aims to train more than 16,500 micro-entrepreneurs and artisans and reach over 110,000 citizens.
- Core Goal: To enable individuals in underserved areas to participate more fully in the digital economy by providing access to essential digital skills and tools.

QUICK READ

PM highlights how carbon capture can power steel revolution

New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday highlighted how carbon capture can power India's next steel revolution as the country's guided efforts towards Net Zero 2070 commitment, strategic investments, and hydrogen initiatives drive growth, global competitiveness, and lead the road to a Viksit Bharat. PM Modi referred to an article by Union Steel Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy about India's iron and steel sector being at a defining moment in its development journey. As the second largest crude steel producer in the world, with an output of around 152 million tonnes (MT) in FY 2024-25, the sector is fundamental to the country's economic growth, infrastructure expansion and employment generation. With a target of achieving 300 MT of crude steel capacity by FY 2030–31 under the National Steel Policy 2017.

Instagram boss to testify at social media addiction trial

Washington

Adam Mosseri, the head of Instagram, is set to testify in a Los Angeles courtroom on Wednesday as part of a high-profile trial examining whether the app's design contributes to a youth mental health crisis. The case centers on allegations by plaintiffs that Instagram and other platforms owned by Meta Platforms have deliberately engineered features that encourage compulsive use among children and young adults. Lawyers representing families argue that such design choices including algorithm-driven content feeds, notifications and engagement-based recommendations foster what they describe as social media addiction. Mosseri's testimony will mark the first time he faces detailed questioning in court on the issue. The trial is expected to explore how Instagram's product design decisions were made.

US job growth seen rebounding in Jan with fewer layoffs

Washington

US job growth likely picked up in January, supported by fewer layoffs in seasonal industries, but economists say the labour market remains sluggish amid ongoing uncertainty over trade policy and immigration enforcement. The closely watched employment report from the U.S. Department of Labor is expected to show that nonfarm payrolls increased at a faster pace compared to December. Analysts attribute the improvement partly to fewer seasonal layoffs in sectors such as retail and hospitality following the holiday period. Despite the anticipated rebound, broader labour market conditions remain cautious. Lingering uncertainty over import tariffs has dampened business confidence, leading some employers to delay hiring decisions. At the same time, tighter immigration enforcement has constrained the supply of available workers in certain industries, limiting overall labour force growth.

India expands global anti-smuggling network with 42 MoUs

'Smuggling has transformed into an organised, technology-driven economic crime with direct implications for national security and economic stability'

MUMBAI

India has significantly expanded its global enforcement framework against smuggling, signing 42 Mutual Customs Cooperation Agreements (MCCAs) and negotiating 21 more with major trading partners, officials said on Wednesday.

Speaking at an event organised by FICCI CASCADE, Mohan Kumar Singh, Member–Compliance Management at the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), said enforcement strategies must evolve to counter increasingly sophisticated smuggling syndicates.

Enforcement must move beyond event-based seizures to network-based disruption, Singh said, according to a statement from FICCI CASCADE. He stressed that authorities should target financial flows, logistics enablers and international linkages that sustain illicit trade ecosystems.

Singh noted that smuggling has transformed into an organised, technology-driven economic crime with direct implications for national security and economic stability. He said recent Union Budget announcements — including AI-powered image analytics and expanded container scanning across major ports — will further strengthen enforcement capabilities. At the same time, GST simplification and customs reforms are aimed at encouraging compliance and reducing incentives for illicit trade.

Highlighting enforcement achievements in the first three quarters of the current financial year, Singh said authorities seized around 500 kilograms of gold, nearly 150 million sticks of illicit cigarettes, and over 20 metric tonnes of red sanders. Additionally, about 120 kilograms of cocaine were confiscated.

At airports alone, officials seized around 50 kilograms of heroin, nearly 350 kilograms of amphetamines and close to 3,700 kilograms of hydroponic cannabis, the statement said.

Singh emphasised that modern smuggling networks are commodity-agnostic and technologically agile, blending traditional concealment techniques with digital anonymity, complex financial layering and cross-border coordination.

Customs acts as the first line of defence at the country's borders, he said. Through risk-based inspections, advanced cargo screening, non-intrusive examination systems and AI-driven analytics, we are identifying suspicious consignments before they enter the domestic market.

Anil Rajput, Chairman of FICCI CASCADE, underscored the importance of international collaboration. He said strong partnerships among compliant nations are essential to promote legal trade, share intelligence and decisively punish illicit operators. He added that intelligence-led enforcement, financial investigations, coordinated inter-agency action and global alignment remain critical to counter evolving smuggling tactics.

QXO to acquire Kodiak building partners for $2.25 bn in expansion push

NEW YORK

Building-products distributor QXO has agreed to acquire privately held Kodiak Building Partners for approximately $2.25 billion, according to two people with direct knowledge of the transaction.

The deal marks QXO's second acquisition under billionaire chairman and CEO Brad Jacobs, who has been aggressively expanding the company's footprint in the competitive building products distribution sector.

Jacobs is seeking to position QXO as a formidable rival to retail giants Home Depot and Lowe's. The acquisition of Kodiak follows QXO's $11 billion purchase of Beacon Roofing Supply last year, significantly boosting its presence in roofing and waterproofing materials.

The latest move comes after a setback in June, when Atlanta-based Home Depot outbid QXO in a hostile takeover attempt for drywall and ceilings distributor GMS. That loss slowed Jacobs' ambitious strategy to scale QXO's annual revenue from roughly $5 billion to a targeted $50 billion.

With a market value exceeding $16 billion, QXO competes in wholesale building materials distribution against much larger rivals. Home Depot is valued at approximately $388 billion, while Lowe's carries a market capitalisation of around $160 billion.

Industry observers say the acquisition of Kodiak Building Partners could help QXO deepen its distribution network and strengthen relationships with contractors and professional builders, key customer segments in the wholesale market.

Medicinal plants can drive rural livelihoods and global wellness leadership, Minister Prataprao Jadhav said.

'India aims to become global hub for medicinal plants'

NEW DELHI

Medicinal plants are not only the foundation of India's traditional knowledge systems but also a vital pillar of its biological and economic heritage, Union Ayush Minister Prataprao Jadhav said on Wednesday.

Inaugurating a one-day Chintan Shivir on Medicinal Plants organised by the National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB) under the Ministry of Ayush, Jadhav highlighted the growing global recognition of Ayurveda and other Ayush systems. He said this rising acceptance presents India with a major opportunity to emerge as a leading global supplier of high-quality medicinal plants and plant-based wellness products.

The minister noted that the theme of the Chintan Shivir aligns closely with the government's vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047 and the broader Atmanirbhar Bharat mission. He emphasised that empowering rural communities through sustainable cultivation of medicinal plants can generate stable livelihoods while strengthening India's health ecosystem.

The medicinal plants sector provides unique opportunities for farmers, entrepreneurs and researchers to collaborate for a healthy, self-reliant India, Jadhav said.

He commended the efforts of NMPB in strengthening backward and forward linkages across the value chain, improving market access and ensuring quality and authenticity in the supply chain. He urged stakeholders to work collectively toward building a globally competitive, environmentally sustainable and economically vibrant medicinal plants sector that benefits both farmers and society's healthcare needs.

Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, Secretary of the Ministry of Ayush, said the silver jubilee of NMPB marks not just an achievement but also an opportunity for introspection and innovation. He stressed that the next phase of growth must focus on scientific validation, traceability systems and climate resilience to conserve and optimally utilise India's rich medicinal flora in line with international standards.

The ministry is working to strengthen regional facilitation centres, research partnerships and digital linkages to enhance coordination among stakeholders. Kotecha added that the outcomes of the Chintan Shivir would guide a five-year roadmap aimed at making the sector more productive, inclusive and globally competitive.

Software stock rout slows deals, IPO activity amid valuation uncertainty

NEW YORK

A broad selloff in software stocks is slowing deal-making and initial public offerings, as market volatility clouds valuations and makes buyers more cautious, advisers say. The downturn, which has unfolded over months, intensified recently, with the S&P 500 Software and Services Index posting its worst three-month stretch since May 2002, according to Evercore ISI strategists. Bankers say sharp price swings have made it difficult to determine fair value for software companies that once commanded premium valuations on strong growth and recurring revenue. Buyers are hesitant to pursue acquisitions, while sellers resist accepting lower prices.

IPO pipelines are also feeling the strain. Companies preparing to list are reconsidering timelines, concerned about pricing shares below long-term potential. Volatile markets complicate efforts by underwriters to gauge investor demand.

The sector remains sensitive to interest rate expectations and shifting risk appetite. Higher borrowing costs have dampened enthusiasm for high-growth technology stocks. While strategic buyers remain active, private equity firms are more selective as financing tightens and return expectations adjust.

India's space startups cross 400 mark, investments surpass $500 mn

NEW DELHI

Six Indian NGEs have launched 18 satellites into orbit so far, which highlights the growing participation of private players in India's space programme.

India's space sector has witnessed remarkable expansion, with the number of space startups surpassing 400 and cumulative investments crossing $500 million, the Lok Sabha was informed onWednesday.

In a written reply, Minister of State Dr Jitendra Singh said two private sector companies have successfully tested and flown their launch vehicles in sub-orbital missions in November 2022 and May 2024.

He also noted that 25 payloads have flown or are scheduled to fly on the PSLV Orbital Experimental Module (POEM), which enables Non-Governmental Entities (NGEs) to test and validate the space flight-worthiness of their technologies.

A total of six Indian NGEs have launched 18 satellites into orbit so far, the minister added, highlighting the growing participation of private players in India's space programme. Dr Singh said that the planned establishment of an Earth Observation (EO) satellite constellation under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model is expected to spur innovation and enhance global confidence in Indian space technology companies.

Currently, 25 companies are testing satellites and subsystems in real space environments through platforms such as POEM. State governments, he noted, are increasingly viewing space as a sunrise sector and are introducing proactive policies and incentive schemes to support companies in this domain. Indian space firms are also gradually integrating into global aerospace and space supply chains.

The rapid growth follows the launch of the Startup India initiative on January 16, 2016, by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The flagship programme was designed to foster innovation, simplify regulatory frameworks and provide funding support to entrepreneurs.

Among the prominent space startups that have emerged since 2014 are Pixxel, Dhruva Space, Skyroot Aerospace, Agnikul Cosmos and Bellatrix Aerospace. Bengaluru-based Pixxel has already launched the first satellites of its Firefly constellation India's first commercial satellite constellation delivering advanced hyperspectral imaging capabilities.

Officials said India's transformation from a global back-office to an innovation architect reflects not only technological ambition but also institutional reform, decentralised opportunity and a broader push to embed innovation into everyday governance. The rise of space startups is increasingly seen as strengthening India's sovereign space intelligence and expanding its footprint in the global space economy.

Yogi presents Rs 9.12L cr budget with focus on law and order

LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Finance Minister Suresh Khanna on Wednesday presented a Rs 9,12,696.35 crore budget for the financial year 2026-27 in the Assembly, an increase of nearly 12.9 per cent over the previous year. The Budget includes new schemes worth Rs 43,565.33 crore.

The government has placed special emphasis on capital expenditure, fiscal discipline, strengthening law and order, and expanding health and medical infrastructure.

Capital expenditure has been pegged at 19.5 per cent of the total outlay. Education has been allocated 12.4 per cent of the Budget, medical and health services 6 per cent, and agriculture and allied sectors 9 per cent.

In line with the 16th Central Finance Commission's recommendations, the fiscal deficit for 2026-27 has been capped at 3 per cent of GSDP, a limit that will remain applicable until 2030-31.

Khanna said the government remains committed to prudent financial management. The state's debt-to-GSDP ratio, which stood at 29.3 per cent in 2016-17, declined to 27.9 per cent in 2019-20. It rose to 33.4 per cent in 2021-22 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but has since been brought down to below 27 per cent in 2024-25. The target is to reduce it further to 23.1 per cent in 2026-27 and below 20 per cent in the medium term.

Significant provisions have been made to enhance police infrastructure. Compared to 2016, incidents of robbery, loot, murder, riots and kidnapping for ransom have reportedly declined by 89 per cent, 85 per cent, 47 per cent, 70 per cent and 62 per cent, respectively. A reduction has also been recorded in crimes against women and atrocities against the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.

The Budget earmarks Rs 1,374 crore for the construction of non-residential police buildings and Rs 1,243 crore for residential facilities.

INDIA US PLASTICS

India-US Trade Deal opens $75 bn opportunity plastic exporters

MUMBAI

The recently concluded India-US trade deal is expected to unlock significant opportunities for domestic plastic manufacturers, enabling India to expand its footprint in the lucrative American plastics market, industry leaders said.

Speaking to IANS, Arvind Goenka, Managing Director of RMG Polymers India Limited, described the agreement as a golden opportunity for Indian exporters.

The India-US trade deal will open up a large US market for domestic plastic exporters, Goenka said. He noted that the United States imports plastics worth approximately $75 billion annually, while India's current plastic exports to the US stand at around $2.2 billion.

Given the vast size of the American market, Goenka believes Indian plastic exports to the US could potentially double over the next few years. He added that the US is also a major buyer of PVC (polyvinyl chloride), and

large-scale procurement from India could boost the country's overall plastic and PVC exports.

If American buyers increasingly source plastic and PVC products from India, these goods could subsequently be re-exported to other international markets, strengthening India's global positioning, he said. This agreement will not only prove beneficial for the plastic industry but will also help establish India as a strong and reliable supplier, Goenka added.

Highlighting the scale of the opportunity, he pointed out that the US economy is valued at approximately $30 trillion, with a population of around 340 million. Higher disposable incomes in the US translate into strong demand for premium-quality products. As Indian manufacturers scale up to meet American quality standards, similar high-quality products could become more widely available in the domestic market, benefiting Indian consumers as well.

Goenka further emphasised the multiplier effect of exporting to the United States. He said that products accepted in the US often gain credibility in other regions, including the Gulf, Europe and Russia. Increased trade with the US, therefore, could enhance India's export prospects globally.

Industry observers believe the trade agreement could serve as a catalyst for capacity expansion, technological upgrades and improved compliance standards within India's plastics sector, positioning the country for sustained export-led growth.

Flights, Hotels Surge Ahead of India-Pakistan T20 in Colombo

AIRFARES AND HOTEL TARIFFS SPIKE SHARPLY BEFORE MARQUEE CLASH

CHENNAI

In less than 24 hours after the Pakistan government cleared its cricket team to face India on February 15 in Colombo, travel demand has sent airfares soaring across major Indian cities. With fans scrambling to secure last-minute tickets for the high-voltage T20 encounter, airlines and hotels are witnessing an unprecedented surge in bookings — and prices.

The cheapest non-stop return flight from Delhi to Colombo is currently priced at a staggering Rs 1,18,961 as of Wednesday evening. Under normal circumstances, fares on this route typically remain below Rs 30,000. Similarly, low-cost carrier IndiGo, which usually charges around Rs 16,000 for a direct return flight from Chennai, is quoting Rs 54,475 for travel between February 14 and February 16.

Chennai, just an 80-minute flight from Colombo, has emerged as a preferred departure point for many fans hoping to reduce travel expenses. However, even this shorter route has seen steep hikes. Travellers from Mumbai are facing return fares of approximately Rs 82,000.

The hospitality sector in Colombo is mirroring the aviation boom. Several star hotels have increased tariffs by six to ten times their usual rates. A prominent luxury landmark hotel, which typically charges around Rs 10,000 per night, is reportedly quoting as high as Rs 1.5 lakh for match weekend stays.

The much-anticipated fixture is also expected to draw top cricket administrators, including ICC Chair Jay Shah and Pakistan Cricket Board chief Mohsin Naqvi, adding further significance to the event.

Stokes Undergoes Successful Surgery after Facial Injury

LONDON

England Test captain Ben Stokes has undergone successful surgery after being struck in the face by a cricket ball, the all-rounder confirmed in a social media update from hospital.

The 34-year-old shared a photograph last week showing a severely swollen and bruised eye, along with a graze on his cheek and lip and a bandage placed in his nose. In a light-hearted caption accompanying the image, Stokes had joked, "You should see the state of the cricket ball," followed by a laughing emoji.

Stokes posted another photograph from his hospital bed, his face still visibly swollen, and wrote: "May not look like it but the surgery was a success." Details regarding the exact nature of the procedure or the expected recovery timeline have not yet been disclosed.

The injury comes at a challenging time for Stokes, who recently returned to England after a disappointing Ashes campaign that ended in a 4-1 series defeat to Australia. Despite the setback, Stokes has publicly expressed his desire to continue as England's red-ball captain, although his position is subject to an ongoing review by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB).

Stokes is currently not part of England's white-ball plans and is absent from the ongoing T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka.

If his recovery progresses smoothly, he could make a return to competitive cricket with Durham in the early rounds of the County Championship. England are scheduled to begin their home Test summer against New Zealand at Lord's on June 4 — a date that also marks Stokes's 35th birthday.

SA Beat Afghanistan in Double Super Over Thriller at T20 WC

AHMEDABAD

South Africa triumphed over Afghanistan in a thrilling double super over at the 2026 T20 World Cup, prevailing off the final ball after a tied group-stage match in Ahmedabad on Wednesday.

Chasing South Africa's 187-6, Afghanistan matched the total, forcing a super over. Even the first super over ended in a tie, sending the match into a second sudden-death showdown. Dewald Brevis ultimately struck the winning run for the Proteas in a tense finish that had fans on the edge of their seats.

Earlier, South Africa's innings was powered by blazing half-centuries from Quinton de Kock (59) and Ryan Rickelton (61). The pair shared a 114-run partnership after an early wicket, attacking Afghanistan's bowling and forcing the rotation of bowlers at the largely empty stadium. De Kock reached his fifty off 34 balls, while Rickelton followed with a six to reach his half-century.

Proteas edge Afghanistan off final ball in nail-biting double super over.

Afghanistan's leg-spinner Rashid Khan staged a late fightback, removing both de Kock and Rickelton in quick succession, curbing the Proteas' momentum. Dewald Brevis added 23 off 19 balls but fell while trying to accelerate the scoring. David Miller (20 not out) and Marco Jansen (16 off seven balls) ensured South Africa posted a competitive total of 187-6.

In reply, Afghanistan's chase was equally tense, as they matched the total to force a super over.

Both teams delivered high-pressure performances in the first tie-breaker, before South Africa finally clinched victory in the second super over, highlighting the drama and unpredictability of the T20 format.

The thrilling finish boosts South Africa's standing in the group stage while providing a spectacular display of hitting, bowling, and nerve under pressure on cricket's biggest stage.

'We'll Play With a Different Mindset': Farhan Ahead of India Clash

COLOMBO : Pakistan opener Sahibzada Farhan exuded confidence ahead of the much-anticipated ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 clash against India on February 15, saying his side will approach the contest with a "different mindset" while treating it as just another game. Farhan's explosive 73 off 41 balls, studded with six fours and five sixes, powered Pakistan to a formidable 190/9 against the USA at the Sinhalese Sports Club. An all-round performance from Shadab Khan then sealed a comprehensive 32-run victory, keeping Pakistan unbeaten and atop Group A with four points from two matches. Speaking after the win, Farhan said the team's strong start has boosted belief. "When you win two matches and are at the top of the table, you feel confident. The upcoming match is not such a big deal; we're not playing against them for the first time. We've played before, and this time we'll play with a different mindset," he said.

Highlighting the batting effort, Farhan noted that posting 190 on a good surface was still a significant achievement. He stitched together an 81-run partnership with Babar Azam (46), laying the platform for a late flourish from Shadab, who smashed 30 off just 12 deliveries.

Defending 191, Pakistan's bowlers responded strongly after the USA's brisk start.

SPORTING CLUB BENGALURU PUSH FOR I-LEAGUE PARTICIPATION

BENGALURU

Sporting Club Bengaluru (SCB) have formally written to the All India Football Federation (AIFF), expressing their willingness to participate in the upcoming I-League season, scheduled to begin on February 21, should a vacancy arise among the confirmed teams.

SCB, who finished in the bottom two last season, see a potential opening after Goan club Churchill Brothers announced a boycott of the league — set to be renamed the Indian Football League — in protest over not being granted a spot in the Indian Super League (ISL) amid their ongoing champions' controversy with Inter Kashi.

In their letter to the AIFF, SCB stated: "In light of recent uncertainties surrounding club participation across divisions, we consider it appropriate to place on record that, in the event any vacancy arises in the I-League owing to withdrawal, non-participation or any other contingency, Sporting Club Bengaluru would be fully prepared and willing to participate in the forthcoming I-League season."

Adding to the uncertainty is Delhi FC, who finished bottom last season and have appealed against relegation. Their plea was heard by the AIFF's disciplinary committee earlier this week, with a decision expected shortly.

Sesko Strikes Late as Manchester United Salvage 1-1 Draw at West Ham

LONDON

Manchester United survived a dramatic scare at the London Stadium as Benjamin Sesko's 96th-minute strike rescued a 1-1 draw against West Ham United in the Premier League, keeping the team in fourth place ahead of Chelsea.

United's winning momentum under coach Michael Carrick seemed under threat after Tomas Soucek's early second-half goal gave West Ham the lead. With the clock winding down, Carrick, who famously engineered late turnarounds as a United player, looked set to suffer his first loss as manager. But substitute Sesko produced a brilliant flicked finish at the near post, stunning the home fans and securing a vital point.

"It is those times when you aren't totally at your best that you find a way," Carrick said. "Credit to the boys for the spirit to get a late goal when we needed it. It is a great quality to have. We'll take the point and move on."

The result came on a day when Chelsea squandered a two-goal lead at Stamford Bridge, drawing 2-2 with Leeds. Liam Rosenior's side had appeared set for a fifth consecutive league win, but late goals from Lukas Nmecha and Noah Okafor allowed Leeds to snatch a point, keeping the Premier League top-four race tight. Liverpool, sitting sixth, could close the gap with a win at Sunderland on Wednesday.

Elsewhere, Tottenham continued to struggle, losing 2-1 at home to Newcastle and remaining just five points clear of the relegation zone. Bournemouth rallied from a goal down to defeat Everton 2-1, with late goals from Rayan and Amine Adli completing the comeback.

United's late heroics keep them in contention for Champions League qualification, while Carrick's side will look to build on the dramatic point in their next league outing.

T20 World Cup 2026: Abhishek Hospitalised, Likely to Miss Namibia Clash

NEW DELHI

India opener Abhishek Sharma has been hospitalised with a stomach infection ahead of the team's T20 World Cup 2026 fixture against Namibia on Thursday, casting doubt over his availability for the match. The explosive left-hander is likely to miss the game, with Sanju Samson expected to open alongside Ishan Kishan.

Abhishek had appeared unwell during India's opening match against the USA, where he did not take the field in the second innings. It was later revealed that he had been dealing with "tummy issues." He was the only member absent from the team's training session, further indicating that his condition had not improved.

Assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate confirmed the situation, saying, "Abhi still got a few issues with his tummy. We hope that he'll be available for the game in a few days' time." His absence at training saw Samson bat alongside Kishan in the nets, hinting at a possible change in the opening combination.

Abhishek has been one of India's most consistent performers in the shortest format over the past 18 months and played a key role in the team's build-up to their title defence. His potential absence is a setback as India look to build early momentum in the tournament.

The team management will also be monitoring his recovery closely with the high-profile clash against Pakistan scheduled for Sunday in Colombo. "Obviously we are waiting on Abhi's fitness more than anything and that'll open up a few different combinations," ten Doeschate added.

India will hope for a swift recovery, recalling how Shubman Gill overcame illness during the 2023 World Cup to make a strong comeback later in the tournament.

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